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38.110



AN
ENQUIRY
RESPECTING
L O V E,
AS
ONE OF THE DIVINE ATTRIBUTES.

“ God is love.”—1 John, iv. 8. 16.

BY THOMAS GISBORNE, M.A.
PREBENDARY OF DURHAM.

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AN
ENQUIRY,
&c. &c.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS.

GOD *is Love* : concentrated, unchanging, perfect Love. Such is the declaration of the Scriptures.

Such, objectors affirm, is not the conclusion of research and experience.

We hear and we read discussions on the Divine Benevolence. What is benevolence? It is qualified Love : Love proceeding to a certain degree. Literally, it is good will. Good will implies a degree of friendly regard, a kind feeling, a portion of Love towards the individual contemplated. Yet it does not necessarily imply that the friendly regard, the kind feeling, the portion of Love, is in all cases, or in the

particular case, very large. Benevolence not only is capable of gradations, but it is not the spirit of Love without circumscription. It may exist with a warmth of affection and a diffusiveness of expansion falling far short of concentrated and perfect Love; far short of that Love which so characterises a being in whom it dwells as to be justly identified with Him. Writers who contend for the Divine benevolence, according to the usual acceptation of the term, may thus set before themselves a seemingly easier task: but they do not contend for the character of God as declared by His Spirit. In God dwells Love in immutable perfection: so pervading, if we may thus speak, the whole essence of the Deity, so directing all His counsels and all His operations, that Love may be rightly identified with Him, and He with Love. *God is Love*. When we speak, therefore, of the benevolence of God, we employ a term lowering the attribute which we design to ascribe to Him; and tending to excite and to establish in our minds indefinite, and inadequate, and therefore unworthy thoughts of the glorious perfection which we profess to extol. Let us take our stand on the ground provided for us

in His own word: *God is Love*. Believers in His truth and in the Christian Revelation, we believe the assertion upon the credit of the Divine veracity. But we may lawfully rejoice in finding corroborations furnished to it by research and experience.

God is the sole self-existent Being. The objects, therefore, as to which His Love is exercised and exemplified must be the sentient beings whom He has created.

The numbers and the diversities of the sentient beings dispersed throughout the universe, the workmanship of His power and the recipients of His bounty, may be vast beyond the reach of the most exuberant imagination. That it is thus vast is unquestionable. Consider this little globe which we inhabit, this atom in illimitable space; and try to approach towards a computation of the various tribes and kinds of living essences known to exist on its surface and in the seas, from the elephant down to the minutest insect discoverable by the most powerful microscope, from the whale to the animated particle which builds the coral reef. What, then, must be the incalculable ramifications and modes of vital existence, the count

less hosts of distinct classes of beings, contained merely in the orbs within that corner of creation on which alone the human eye can gaze ! What may be anticipated in the universe !

Our experimental reasonings, however, on the Divine attribute of Love must be deduced from the proceedings of God towards those divisions of beings, concerning which we possess indubitable intelligence. Of such divisions there are only three : Angels, the human race, and the collective mass of irrational animals. The term irrational is here used in its ordinary but inaccurate application.

CHAP. II.

OF THE DIVINE LOVE AS MANIFESTED RESPECT-
ING ANGELS.

CONCERNING Angels we know simply that which is revealed in the Scriptures. In modern ages, those beings, of whatever description, are not personally the objects of perceptible communication with men. And, though we rest assured that, in the earlier periods of the world, even to the days of the Apostles, Angelic Messengers were commissioned to render themselves manifest to individuals; our information is restricted to the brief details recorded in the Sacred Writings.

That the various particulars which the Scriptures relate concerning Angels concur in attesting the statement that *God is Love*, is a proposition which it will not be presumptuous to maintain.

The circumstance evidently requiring to be noticed antecedently to all other intelligence, which the Scriptures impart concerning Angels,

is the separation of those superhuman beings into two divisions, holy Angels, and evil Angels. All the Angels were created holy and happy, partakers of the Love of God and exemplifications of its fulness. What was the period in the unseen ages of eternity during which this blissful state continued, we know not ; but we know that as to numbers amid the Angelic Hosts it came to an end. Temptation assailed them ; they sinned and fell. They *kept not their first estate* of righteousness and felicity : they *left their own* original habitation in heaven : they were cast into hell, and are reserved in chains and darkness unto the Judgment of the great day. The consideration of their condition will be resumed ; and the conclusions to which it leads, as connected with our general subject, will be developed, when we shall have contemplated the conduct of the Deity respecting the holy Angels, and the inferences to be deduced from it.

Of those Angels who, though subjected to their appropriate probation, whatever may have been its nature, maintained their first estate of obedience and blessedness, the characteristic designation is holiness. It is the characteristic

designation attributed to them by our Saviour. *The Son of Man shall come in His glory, and all the holy Angels with Him.*¹ Of all men who in this world *are ashamed of Him and of His words*, of them *also shall He be ashamed when he cometh in the glory of His Father with the holy Angels.*² They are described in other passages of Scripture by additional titles, indicating them as beings exalted to signal preeminence, and endued with most noble qualities and attainments. They are termed *Angels of God*; *Angels of the Lord*; *Angels of Light*; *Mighty, excelling in strength, and in wisdom.*³ They have received the gift of immortal life. They stand in the presence of the Most High, and are made acquainted with many of His counsels. The multitude of the Angelic Hosts is beyond computation. They are *the innumerable company of Angels.*⁴ They are distributed into orders and degrees. We hear of Michael the Archangel; we hear of other Angels, described by the name of Seraphim⁵; we hear of *thrones, and dominions, and prin-*

¹ Matth. xxv. 31.² Mark, viii. 38.³ 2 Thess. i. 7. 2 Sam.

xiv. 20. Psalm ciii. 20.

Luke, xx. 36.

⁴ Hebr. xii. 22.⁵ Isaiah, vi. 2. 6.

*cipalities, and powers of Heaven.*¹ But, whatever be the rank of the different *Angels of God*, all of them are holy. All of them are *ministering Spirits* to the Lord Almighty, *doing His commandments, hearkening to the voice of His word, ministers of His that do His pleasure.*² It may be that He sees fit to conduct in part by their agency the government of the universe. But, whatever be the manner in which He may have determined to exercise his superintendence over worlds to us unknown; we are assured that, in ruling the globe on which we dwell, He is pleased largely to employ the services of Angels. When the foundations of the earth were laid, the Angels were present, and beheld the new creation with rapture. *The Morning Stars sang together: and all the Sons of God shouted for joy.*³ When the law was promulgated on Mount Sinai, they were present; and, though invisible to mortal eyes, had functions of dignity and sacredness assigned to them in the awful solemnity. *The Law was received by the disposition of Angels. It was*

¹ Coloss. i. 16. Eph. 3.
10.

² Hebr. i. 7. 14. Psalm
ciii. 20, 21.

³ Job, xxxviii. 7.

*ordained by Angels in the hand of a Mediator.*¹ When the Son of God invested Himself with human nature, for the purpose of accomplishing the mystery of redemption, that stupendous mystery of Divine Love *into which the Angels desire to look*²; their ministry was called forth in its most ample extent to glorify the mighty Saviour. To announce His incarnation, an Angel was sent to the Virgin Mary. The birth of His forerunner John the Baptist was predicted by an Angel to Zacharias. From the moment of the birth of Christ, to Him, though he had taken upon himself the form of a servant, to Him, even when he had thus humbled Himself, all the hosts of heaven were placed in subjection. His Everlasting Father, when He brought His First-begotten Son into the world, said: *Let all the Angels of God worship him.*³ When the appearance upon earth of the Lord Jesus was communicated to the shepherds by an Angel, *suddenly there was with Him a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men.*⁴

¹ Acts, vii. 53. Gal. iii.

19.

² 1 Pet. i. 12.

³ Hebr. i. 6.

⁴ Luke, ii. 13, 14.

It was by an Angel that God commanded Joseph to remove the Infant and His Mother into Egypt from the murderous machinations of Herod. It was an Angel who, after the death of Herod, appeared to Joseph, and directed him to return with the young Child into the land of Israel. When our Redeemer had encountered and repelled the temptations of the Devil in the wilderness; *behold, Angels came and ministered unto Him.*¹ When he was in his Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, *there appeared unto Him an Angel from heaven strengthening Him.*² When seized by his enemies, He could instantly have received the aid, had He chosen to deliver Himself from death, of *more than twelve legions of Angels.*³ When the hour of his Resurrection was come, *an Angel of the Lord, whose countenance was like lightning and his raiment white as snow, descended from heaven, and rolled back the stone from the door of the sepulchre.*⁴ It was by Angels that the women who came to the tomb were instructed that Christ was risen. When, after the completion of his undertaking of mercy upon earth,

¹ Matth. iv. 11.

² Luke, xxii. 43.

³ Matth. xxvi. 53.

⁴ Matth. xxviii. 2, 3.

He ascended into heaven, two Angels showed themselves by the side of his disciples, and averred to them that He should again come from heaven, in the same manner in which they had witnessed his ascent. To Him, as Head of his Church, now that he is exalted in his human nature to the right hand of God, *Angels, and authorities, and powers, are made subject.*¹ Of His present government, of His flock throughout the world, they are spectators and ministers, *to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God.*² *When He shall come in his glory, to judge the world, all the holy Angels shall be with Him. And He shall send them forth, and they shall gather out of His Kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. And they shall sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire.*³

The Scriptures discover to us various purposes for which Angels have been commissioned to appear to men. Sometimes they have been sent to convey practical directions from God to His

¹ 1 Pet. iii. 22.

² Ephes. iii. 19.

³ Matth. xiii. 39. 49, 50.

servants: as when the prophet Gad was commanded by an Angel to bear a message to David; and Philip the Evangelist to go down into the desert between Jerusalem and Gaza, that he might be ready for the service on which he was there to be employed. Sometimes they were to reveal far distant events, as to Daniel and to St. John. Sometimes they were to communicate special assurances of the Divine favour, which in certain cases were also accompanied with a disclosure of future events, or with instructions to the individuals: as to Abraham, to Hagar, to Zachariah, to Cornelius. Sometimes they were charged with messages of wrath: as to Balaam the soothsayer, and to the rebellious people of Israel at Bochim.¹ Sometimes they were commissioned to afford to the servants of God assistance and deliverance in seasons of affliction or of peril: as to the Israelites in their departure from Egypt; to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the furnace; to Daniel in the den of lions; to the diseased at the pool of Bethesda; to Peter in the prison; to Paul on his voyage into Italy. Sometimes they were sent forth to execute judgements for iniquity: as to destroy

¹ Numbers, xxii. 23. 25. Judges, ii. 1—5.

the first-born of the Egyptians; to rain fire and brimstone upon Sodom and the neighbouring cities; to bring low the multitude of the people whom David in the pride of his heart had unlawfully numbered; to disable the army of Sennacherib; to smite Herod on his throne, when with blasphemous satisfaction he appropriated to himself honour pertaining to God. But it is not only to some favoured nation involved in some extraordinary trial, or to individuals eminent, as Prophets, as Apostles, or as Martyrs, that Angels are commissioned with purposes of mercy. Of all the faithful worshippers of the Most High these heavenly intelligences are the appointed and the constant protectors. *Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them that shall be heirs of salvation?*¹ They are sent forth to minister for good to every follower of Christ. *The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.*² What was the language of our Lord to his disciples, when he placed in the midst of them a little child as an example of lowliness of mind? *Whoso shall despise one of these little ones that believe in me, it were*

¹ Hebr. i. 14.

² Psalm xxxiv. 7.

*better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depths of the sea. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you that in heaven their Angels (the Angels to whose care they are specially committed) do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.*¹ That generally the Angels are entrusted by their gracious God with a previous knowledge of events which he has decreed to bring to pass upon the earth, our Saviour evinces by a very emphatical exception as to a particular case, the time of his future return in glory: *of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the Angels of heaven.*² Other passages in the word of God imply that

¹ Matth. xviii. 6—10.

² Math. xxiv. 36. Περι δε της ημερας εκεινης ουδεις ουδεν. The word ουδεις had been better rendered in its indefinite sense, no one, no being in the creation, not even any angel, no existence save God himself. Our translators of the New Testament, in their singularly excellent version, have fallen more than once into a similar mistake respecting the local meaning of ουδεις. Thus Rev. v. 3. we read, *And no man in heaven, nor in earth, nor under the earth, was able to open the book, neither to look thereon.* So again in the succeeding verse, *And I wept much because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book.* The original stands thus:—Και ουδεις ηδυνατο εν τω ουρανω, &c. Και εγω εκλαιον πολλα οτι ουδεις αξιος ευρεθη, &c. The meaning in each verse evidently is, that no being, neither angel nor man nor departed spirit, was able or worthy to open or even to look upon the book.

the Angels are continual and attentive witnesses of human actions. St. Paul, speaking of the incessant persecutions experienced by himself and by the other apostles, has this remarkable expression : *We are made a spectacle unto the world, and to Angels.*¹ On another occasion, when he is enforcing a solemn admonition upon Timothy, his words are these : *I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect Angels.*² Nor is this inspection of earthly transactions on the part of the heavenly hosts a mere exercise of curious observance respecting the manners of inferior beings ; nor simply a reverent and admiring contemplation of the unbounded wisdom and the diversified operations of the Most High. It is accompanied by warm and affectionate solicitude for the welfare of man. *When one sinner repenteth, there is joy over him in heaven, in the presence of the Angels of God.*³ Our Saviour's declaration that at the day of judgement He will confess, as his own, every one who has confessed Him, and will deny every one who has been ashamed of Him, before the assembled Angels, attests the lively interest

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 9. ² 1 Tim. v. 21. ³ Luke, xv. 7—10.

which they will feel in the sentence that shall be passed upon different persons. And in his parable of the rich man and Lazarus He appears to authorise the conclusion, that one part of the ministration of Angels is to convey and to welcome to everlasting rest the unbodied spirits of the righteous.

Is it not then manifest from the scriptural statements which have been produced, that the divine conduct respecting the Holy Angels fully sustains the proposition that *God is love*? Is it not manifest from the exalted qualities with which He has endowed them, from the glory and blessedness with which he has arrayed them, from the gift of immortal existence with which he has crowned them, from the condescending confidence with which he renders them partakers of His counsels, from the ministrations in which he employs their service? If the conclusion be undeniable, in what an unbounded measure is His love multiplied and magnified to our conceptions, when we reflect that these highly-favoured beings form an *innumerable company*! Do we ask what are their own sentiments respecting their Almighty Benefactor? We hear with Isaiah their sentiments

from the lips of the Seraphim, when they appear standing by the throne of God in his Temple, and in adoration, veiling their faces with their wings, exclaim, "*Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts: the whole earth is full of His glory.*"¹ We hear them with St. John, when he *beheld and heard the voice of many Angels round about the Throne, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice; Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.* Again, we listen with the same Apostle when *all the Angels stood round about the throne, and fell before the throne on their faces and worshipped God, saying, Amen! Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever! Amen!*²

It is possible that an objector may ask

¹ Isaiah, vi. 1—3.

² Rev. v. 11. vii. 11, 12.

whether it can be consistent with love on the part of God towards Holy Angels, to require them, according to admitted facts, to be the bearers of messages of rebuke and wrath, or to be the executioners of penal inflictions, even to the extermination, nay, to the final perdition, of the offenders. An answer to this question will be deduced from the reply to be returned to another. Is it consistent with love, to send messages of rebuke and wrath, to decree penal inflictions, to ordain the extermination and even the final perdition of offenders? If these messages and decisions be consistent with love, it cannot be inconsistent with love to employ other beings as agents to communicate and to accomplish them. Are they then consistent with the character of a Being who is Love? Unquestionably messages of rebuke and indignation may be proceedings of positive and signal kindness to the transgressor, calculated to awaken his conscience and to lead him to repentance and forgiveness. If he remains perseveringly and determinately unimpressible by these manifestations of love, and can no longer be fitly an object of the exercise of love; his merited and necessary punishment, be it

even to final perdition, may yet be an exercise of love towards incalculable multitudes of other intelligent and responsible existences, whom the example of his punishment may stimulate as a powerful admonition to obedience ; whom impunity permitted to him might have encouraged to transgression, and have beguiled to destruction.

In noticing the preceding objection I have purposely forbore from entering prematurely into the discussion of the great question, which must inevitably be met in the progress of this investigation ; How can the existence of evil, physical or moral, among created beings, be compatible with the truth of the position that *God is love* ? The objection seemed entitled to be produced ; and the remarks which have been made concerning it appear to furnish for the present a sufficient reply.

CHAP. III.

RESPECTING EVIL ANGELS.

OF Evil Spirits, as of Holy Angels, our knowledge is derived exclusively from the word of God. The Scriptures, which never afford insight into such circumstances connected with the unseen Universe, as, if disclosed, would merely gratify curiosity and foster unprofitable speculation, say little concerning the rebellion of these unhappy beings against their Maker in addition to the statement of the fact and of its consequences. And that statement is uniformly introduced in the way of an awful warning to men not to offend. *God spared not the Angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgement.*¹ *The Lord knoweth how to reserve the unjust unto the day of Judgement, to be punished.* Of these fallen spirits who revolted from their allegiance to Jehovah, the instigator and the leader, himself originally, as

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 4. 9., and Jude, ver. 6.

it should seem, an Angel eminent in dignity, is denominated specifically, The Devil, and also *Satan*, the adversary, the adversary of God and subsequently of man, and *Beelzebub the Prince of the Devils*.¹ From the time of his original apostasy he has persisted in his enmity against God; and since the formation of the human race has displayed unceasing hatred against them as favoured creatures of the Almighty. No sooner were our first parents stationed in Paradise, than Satan planned and accomplished their ruin. Assuming the shape, or using the organs, of the serpent, he persuaded Eve, and by her instrumentality, induced Adam to transgress the commandment, ordained to be the test of their obedience. Thus, having drawn them away from God, and subjected them to his own influence and dominion, he became the author of sin, and of wretchedness, and of death, to them and to all their posterity. Hence the Scriptures describe the Devil as having the power of death.² With reference to this transaction, he is termed in the New Testament the Serpent, the old Serpent, the great Dragon, which deceiveth the whole world. With re-

¹ Matth. xii. 24.

² Hebr. ii. 14.

ference also to the destruction, which by his subtle falsehood he brought upon mankind, and perhaps with a view to the everlasting misery in which he has overwhelmed the Angels whom he has deluded; he is pronounced by our Saviour to have been *a murderer from the beginning*: to have *no truth in him*: to be *a liar and the father of lies*. Through his temptations all flesh has corrupted its way upon earth: *the whole world lieth in wickedness*.¹ Hence unrighteous men are denominated in the Scriptures the children of Satan. *He that committeth sin is of the Devil: for the Devil sinneth from the beginning*. In this *the children of God are manifest and the Children of the Devil*.² *The field is the world: the tares are Children of the wicked one: the enemy that sowed them is the Devil*.³ *Ye are of your father the Devil: and the lusts of your father ye will do*.⁴ *One of you is a Devil*.⁵ Sins of every description, and without exception, are habitually described as works of Satan. Christ came to destroy *the works of the Devil*.⁶ *The coming of the Man of Sin is after the working of*

¹ 1 John, v. 19.

⁴ John, viii. 44.

² 1 John, iii. 8—10.

⁵ John, vi. 70.

³ Matth. xiii. 38, 39.

⁶ 1 John, iii. 8.

Satan, with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.¹ I know the blasphemy of them which are the synagogue of Satan. I know where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is, where Satan dwelleth. As many as have not this (corrupt) doctrine, and have not known the depths of Satan.² Then cometh the Devil, and taketh the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved.³

In the Old Testament, we read a memorable example of the malignant activity of this Apostate Spirit. *And Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel.⁴*

The New Testament sets before us his unwearied hostility against the followers of Christ; and unceasingly warns us to vigilance and exertion under the grace of God to withstand it. *The Devil hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat. We would have come unto you once and again, but Satan hindered us⁵ by opposition and persecution which he excited. The Devil shall cast some of you into prison.⁶ Why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the*

¹ 2 Thess. ii. 9, 10.

² Rev. ii. 9. 13. 24.

³ Luke, viii. 12.

⁴ 1 Chron. xxi. 1.

⁵ 1 Thess. ii. 18.

⁶ Rev. ii. 10.

Holy Ghost? ¹ Neither give place to the Devil.² Lest he fall into the snare of the Devil.³ That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devil, who are taken captive by him at his will.⁴ That Satan tempt you not.⁵ Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.⁶ Lest the Tempter have tempted you, and our labour be in vain.⁷ Be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil.⁸ Your adversary the Devil like a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour.⁹

So powerful is the control which the Devil exercises over mankind, so predominating is the influence which he has established in the very nature and over the hearts of all men, that by our Lord he is styled the *Prince of this world*¹⁰, and by St. Paul *the God of this world*.¹¹ Well knowing that to accomplish the destruction of his kingdom, the redemption of the world from his bondage, to *turn men from*

¹ Acts, v. 3.

² Eph. iv. 27.

³ 1 Tim. iii. 7.

⁴ 2 Tim. ii. 26.

⁵ 1 Cor. vii. 5.

⁶ 2 Cor. ii. 2.

⁷ 1 Thess. iii. 5.

⁸ Eph. vi. 10. 18.

⁹ 1 Pet. v. 8.

¹⁰ John, xii. 31. xiv. 30. xvi. 2.

¹¹ 2 Cor. xi. 4.

*darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God*¹, was the object for the achievement of which the Son of God manifested Himself in human nature; this adversary of all righteousness unabatingly directed his darkest machinations against our Lord. No sooner had Jesus been proclaimed to be the promised Redeemer by the testimony of John the Baptist, by the visible descent of the Holy Ghost upon Him after his baptism, and by the voice of his Almighty Father; than the Devil assaulted Him in the wilderness during forty days with diversified temptations. When they all had been proved inefficacious, Satan departed from Christ, but only, as St. Luke pointedly observes, *for a season*.² We cannot doubt that internal trials were among the means by which the Devil continued to afflict our Lord. He also stirred up the malice of the Pharisees, of the Sadducees, of the Herodians. He put it into the heart of Judas to betray his master.³ Christ himself, when his sufferings and his death were at hand, ascribed them to the Devil. *Hereafter*, said he to his disciples, *I will not talk much with you; for the Prince of this world*

¹ Acts, xxvi. 18.² Luke, iv. 13.³ Luke, xxii. 3, 4. John, xiii. 2. 27.

cometh. To his enemies when they seized Him He pronounced the *hour* to be that of the *Powers of darkness*. Thus at length Satan prevailed to bring our Lord to the Cross; unconscious that, while he was exultingly bruising the heel of the Son of God, he was receiving on his own head a mortal wound. But he is permitted to retain a portion of power till the Day of Judgement. Against every person upon earth he continually practises his devices. He tempts us to remain in slavery to him, to add iniquity unto iniquity, to harden ourselves against the grace of God, to refuse deliverance through the blood of Christ: and thus labours to ensnare us into all the present wretchedness which accompanies sin, and into the punishment which in another world is awaiting every impenitent transgressor. In his enmity against God and his attempts for the destruction of men he is constantly seconded by the hosts of Evil Spirits. They are termed in the New Testament his Angels.¹ He is the Wicked One², the Tempter³, the Spirit that still worketh

¹ Matth. xxv. 41. Rev. xii. 7—9.

² Matth. xiii. 19. 38. 1 John, ii. 13, 14. iii. 12. v. 18.

³ Matth. iv. 3. 1 Thess. iii. 5.

*in the children of disobedience.*¹ His angels are *Evil Spirits, foul Spirits, unclean Spirits, seducing Spirits, Principalities and Powers* at his command, *Rulers of the darkness of this world.*²

In the Old Testament we meet with few traces of power openly exercised by Evil Spirits over the bodies of men. In the days of our Lord's ministry, the Devil and his Angels not only occupied themselves, as throughout all former ages, and as they will continue to act to the end of time, in harassing and beguiling the soul by temptations; but were left at liberty, under the permission of God, to disturb and completely to derange the understandings of individuals, and to afflict their bodies with grievous infirmities and with unwonted and torturing maladies. The divine purpose in this permission we cannot but conclude to have been, that the power of Christ to deliver all that in any way, corporeal or spiritual, should be oppressed of the Devil, might be the more gloriously manifested.³ The number of persons rendered miserable by these invisible and irresistible tormentors was very great. In what-

¹ Eph. ii. 2.

² Luke, vii. 21. Acts, xix. 13, &c. Mark, ix. 25. Matth. x. 1. 1 Tim. iv. 1. Eph. vi. 12.

³ Acts, x. 38.

ever part of Judæa and Galilee our Saviour preached the Gospel, into whatever part he sent forth His disciples, persons possessed with Devils were found. On a single evening Jesus healed at Capernaum *many*¹ who were thus possessed. The sufferings with which the Evil Spirits overwhelmed those whom they had seized were various. We read of a man who had a *deaf and dumb Spirit*; that is to say, who was under the domination of an Evil Spirit which rendered him both deaf and dumb: so that when the Spirit was cast out, the man instantly recovered his faculties of hearing and of speech. We read of another man possessed by a Devil who deprived the sufferer of speech and of sight: and when the Evil Spirit was expelled by our Lord, the blind and dumb both spake and saw.² We read also of a woman bent double by a *Spirit of infirmity*: and our Lord, on healing her, expressly declared that *Satan* had bowed her down for eighteen years.³ In other instances we find the Devils driving their victims to mountains and deserts, tearing them by the most violent convulsions, or casting them into water or into

¹ Luke, iv. 41. ² Matth. xii. 22. ³ Luke, xiii. 11. 16.

fire. The derangement of intellect, which, from the representations given by the sacred writers of persons possessed, we might conclude to be a common part of their calamities, is pointedly noticed by two of the Evangelists as to a particular individual: for when he was delivered by our Lord from the Evil Spirits, he is described as being again *in his right mind*.¹ That the loss of understanding in persons possessed had not proceeded from ordinary causes of insanity, but was the actual consequence of the possession, is incontestable. St. Matthew, in one of his accounts of afflicted people healed by Christ, carefully distinguishes *those which were possessed with Devils* from *those which were lunatic*.² And not only did the language addressed to our Lord by the Devils through the lips of the person possessed correspond at all times with the reality of the possession, but on many occasions it did actually and of itself prove the possession. For it proved that the speakers knew that which man by his natural powers could not know; that which men had not attained under the offer of Divine teaching

¹ Mark, v. 15. Luke, viii. 35. ² Matth. iv. 24.

to know ; that which men in general, when it was declared to them, would not believe. While the Jews refused to acknowledge Jesus Christ, notwithstanding his wonderful works, to be the promised Redeemer ; while some said, He is Elias ; while others affirmed, He is Jeremiah ; while others answered, He is a Prophet, or as one of the Prophets ; while Herod pronounced Him to be John the Baptist returned from the grave ; the Devils were under no such delusions. They *believed and trembled*.¹ They confessed their Divine Adversary, their appointed conqueror, in his earthly humiliation. They loudly exclaimed, by the organs of the individuals whom they occupied ; “ *We know Thee who Thou art, the Christ, the Holy One of God ! Send us not into the deep, Thou Son of the Most High God ! We adjure Thee that Thou torment us not.* ”² The same confession continued to be made, the same attestation to be borne, in the days of the Apostles. The Evil Spirit by whom the young woman at Philippi was possessed, was constrained to proclaim by her lips concerning Paul and his companions, *These*

¹ James, ii. 19.

² Matth. viii. 29. Mark, i. 24. 34. v. 7. Luke, iv. 34. 41. viii. 31.

*men are the servants of the Most High God, which show unto us the way of salvation.*¹

If the Holy Angels are *an innumerable company*, there are grounds for inferring that the host of fallen Angels, however inferior in amount to those who remained steadfast in righteousness, may also be characterised as surpassing computation. The New Testament exhibits them as always at hand to combine in order to harass a single individual. When an Evil Spirit is described in the Parable as determined to take renewed possession of a man whom he had quitted, he has no difficulty in finding seven other Spirits more wicked than himself, who enter with him into his former abode and dwell there. It is distinctly recorded that out of Mary Magdalen our Saviour had expelled seven Devils.² Consider also that such a multitude of Evil Spirits had united to afflict a sufferer already noticed as to be described by the term Legion.³

There are passages in Scripture which imply that the Deity sees fit occasionally to constrain Evil Spirits to act as his agents in executing

¹ Acts, xvi. 16, 17.

³ Mark, v. 9. Luke, viii.

² Luke, viii. 2.

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chastisement upon transgressors. It was thus that *God sent an Evil Spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem to cause dissensions among them, that the cruelty done to the three-score and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother which slew them, and upon the men of Shechem which aided him in the killing of his brethren.*¹

It was thus that an Evil Spirit was sent to inflict punishment upon Saul. The same instrumentality appears to have had its place in the plagues poured out upon the Egyptians. *God cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending Evil Angels among them.*² A still more remarkable passage occurs in the writings of St. Paul. In reference to a flagrant offender by an incestuous marriage among the Corinthians the Apostle writes, *I have judged concerning him that hath so done this deed; in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*³ It should seem

¹ Judges, ix. 23, 24.

³ 1 Cor. v. 3—5.

² Psalm lxxviii. 49.

that Satan, the prime author and instigator of the iniquity, was compelled by power from the Lord Jesus Christ committed to the Apostle to inflict some very awful and painful kind of bodily malady on the offender, that thus the Tempter himself might be forced to give aid in defeating his own purpose of ruining the soul of his victim, and in stimulating that victim to seek the path of repentance and salvation. A similar course of proceeding may be implied in the declaration of the same Apostle concerning Hymenæus and Alexander ; *Whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme.*¹

So determined is the hostility of Satan against the holy purposes of God, that, when he shall be loosed from his prison, the bottomless pit, after having there been chained during the Millennial reign of righteousness upon earth, he will instantly *go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, to gather them to battle against the servants of the Most High.* The attempt shall bring ruin on all engaged in it, and specially on its author. *And they went up, saith St. John, prophetically*

¹ 1 Tim. i. 20.

beholding and describing the event as present, — *they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city : and fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. And the Devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone ; the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels, to which they shall be finally adjudged in the last Day.*¹

There is a circumstance revealed in the New Testament as connected with the ultimate judgement of these fallen spirits, which is highly impressive. St. Paul, in reproving the Corinthian converts for their litigious selfishness, which impelled them to carry any dispute to a heathen tribunal instead of referring it to the arbitration of some of their Christian brethren, exclaims, *I speak to your shame. Do ye not know that the Saints shall judge the world ? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters ? If then ye have judgements of things pertaining to this life, better were it even to set them to judge who are the least esteemed in the Church, than to resort as ye do to the tribunal of idolaters.*

¹ Rev. xx. 1. 10. Matth. xxv. 11.

The argument, were it left at this point, would be conclusive. But the Apostle has raised it to the highest strength by the additional question, *Know ye not that we shall judge Angels?* In this additional question he announces to the Christian Church, that holy men who, under the grace of their Redeemer, shall have been enabled to withstand in their mortal course the wiles of Satan and his associates, shall be openly exalted in that awful Day to be as it were assessors with their Lord in appreciating the guilt and in pronouncing the condemnation of those apostate hosts, which had laboured to involve them in eternal perdition. *Know ye not that we shall judge Angels?*¹

“ But God,” retorts the objector, “is declared to be a God of love. Is he a God of love to spirits whom he consigns to everlasting torments?” He who asks this question cannot refuse to allow us to propose inquiries in our turn. Is it necessary to the character of a God of love that he should love wickedness and the consummately wicked? Would you maintain such an affirmation respecting a human character of the

1 Cor. vi. 1—6.

most elevated benevolence ? Is not the presence of certain qualities in an object essential to render that object fit to be loved, capable of being loved ? Can that be the object of love which is in itself essentially unlovely, odious, detestable ? Is it inconsistency in a God of love, in a God who is love, to abominate sin and determinate sinners ? Would it not be an imperfection, would it not be a proof that he is not a God of holiness, were it otherwise ? Is it not characteristic of a God of holiness and of justice to impose punishment on determinate sinners ? And may not the imposition of such punishment be an act of pure and eminent love towards multitudes of beings to us unknown, themselves in a state of probation, and witnesses of the consequences which Satan and his Angels have drawn down upon themselves by disobedience ?

“ Be those things as they may,” the objector rejoins, “ you will not deny that the disobedience of these beings was foreseen of God before he created them : and therefore you cannot deny that it was knowingly permitted by Him.” Undoubtedly. “ Can it then be consistent with the character of the Deity, of whom you affirm that He is Love, to create beings whose exist-

ence, exclusively owing to Him and on His part wholly spontaneous, He foresees as entailing upon them eternal perdition ? ”

In this question is involved much more than may at the first glance seem to be included within the limited terms in which it is couched. The subject requires a separate discussion.

CHAP. IV.

ON THE EXISTENCE OF MORAL AND PHYSICAL
EVIL.

THE question attributed at the termination of the preceding chapter to an objector, though apparently restricted to the conduct of the Deity towards a particular class of beings, comprises in the principle on which it rests the far more comprehensive inquiry; If God, the Creator of all things, Omnipotent, Omniscient, perfect in Wisdom, be also a God of love: how can evil, physical or moral, find admission into any part of the Universe?

There are believers in Christianity to whom the existence of evil has been the source of harassing perplexity. Among opponents of the truth of the Christian Revelation, and specially among that class of its philosophical adversaries whose arguments are built *on oppositions of science falsely so called*¹, on imaginary difficulties suggested by a philosophy which does

¹ Αντιθεσεις της ψευδωνυμου γνωσεως. 1 Tim. vi. 20.

not deserve the name, the objection now to be considered is continually heard. It is brought forward not as a speculation suggesting doubts, not as a topic demanding research; but as a plain matter of fact, triumphantly disproving Scriptural statements concerning the perfection of the Divine Attributes, and in particular as decisively subverting the proposition that *God is love*.

To show that the existence of moral evil is not inconsistent with the Scriptural statements concerning the Divine Attributes, nor with the proposition that God is love, will be the object pursued in the present chapter. It will be my decided endeavour so to conduct the investigation as to avoid sundry metaphysical disquisitions, in which similar inquiries have frequently been enveloped.

To bring forward proofs of the Divine Attributes of Omnipotence, Omniscience, Wisdom, Justice, Holiness, all in perfection, or of any other Attribute, Love excepted, forms no part of my plan. It is not merely that they have been amply demonstrated by other writers; but that objectors who deny that God is Love, will at once allow the advocate of that propo-

sition to assume the truth to a certain extent of the other Divine Attributes. The objectors consider, and not without reason, the main strength of their case as resting on the alleged reality of those attributes ; and rejoice that an opponent should load himself with a burden which they trust will be insupportable, and should entangle himself among insuperable difficulties by affirming the reality and the perfection of those Attributes, and yet at the same time maintaining in the face of physical and moral evil that God is Love. Affirming the reality and the perfection of each and of all of those Attributes, let us proceed to the ulterior discussion.

What then are the points, which he who avers that God is Love, and is met by the undisputed existence of evil, can reasonably be required by the objector to prove ?

He may reasonably be required to prove that which is *indispensable* to the establishment of his proposition : but he cannot reasonably be required to prove any point not indispensable.

May he then reasonably be required to show, that the admission of evil into the Creation is

an arrangement which in itself furnishes a proof that God is Love ?

No. He cannot reasonably be required to do more than to show, that the arrangement does not furnish a proof that God is not Love ; that the arrangement may be consistent with His being Love.

Reflect on the infinite distance in the scale of being between Man and God, between human intellect and the Divinity. *Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; What canst thou do? Deeper than Hell; What canst thou know?*¹ Can it be possible for any man so to fathom the profundity of the Divine counsels, so to penetrate into the mysteries of the Divine administration, that he should pronounce at once that it is demonstrable from some single proceeding on the part of the Creator examined simply by itself that God is not Love? Can it be reasonable that a man, an atom, and fixed to a globe which is but as an atom in the illimitable Universe, should be required to develop the effects which some one arrangement bearing upon himself in the Divine

¹ Job, xi. 7, 8.

government, may or may not be intended and instrumental to produce on some other class, nay, on numberless other classes, of sentient and intelligent existences dwelling, or hereafter to be created to dwell, in other provinces of the immeasurable empire of his God?

Man is an atom, and the globe on which he dwells is but an atom in Creation. He comes not now into perceptible contact with the inhabitants of any region beyond the earth; nor does his abode, traversing in its annual circuit between five and six hundred millions of miles, bring him into communication or contiguity with any other planet. He is practically insulated from all beings which partake of life, the fellow-tenants of his globe excepted. Yet are there the clearest proofs that his existence is in close connection with the existence of other beings; and also that he is the object of contemplation and of constant and deep interest to intelligences of the highest order, stationed in the residence assigned to them by his and their Father and Lord. To the discovery of the connection, between his existence and that of other beings, he is guided by his own observation and by the light of astr

nomical science. He immediately perceives that a relation is ordained between the earth and the two great luminaries, of which the one warms and enlightens it by day, the other irradiates it by night. Whether that splendid orb of fire be capable of sustaining inhabitants, or, if capable, be appointed for that additional purpose, he discerns not data for conjecturing. But with respect to the Moon, he gradually notices indications, which appear to render probable, or even to warrant, distinct and affirmative deductions. He observes her varied surface, seemingly analogous to the mountains and the valleys, the land and the seas of the earth. He discovers that she travels annually with the earth round the Sun, and thus experiences like the earth successive changes of seasons. He detects her revolution round her own axis; and her consequent possession of night and day of her own. All these provisions suggest to him that there are beings on her surface, who are to be benefited by them; and assure him, that he is linked by common ties to a visible and habitable sphere. Speedily he advances farther. He learns that there are other planets borne like the earth, each in its orbit

and in its allotted period, round the same nearly central Sun ; each revolving on its own axis ; each thus experiencing vicissitudes of seasons and alternations of day and night : and that the more distant of these globes are furnished with attendant moons, and one of them with an encircling band of radiance, in order that in every case the requisite proportion of light may be complete. Can he doubt whether these mansions are erected for inhabitants adapted to them ? He doubteth not : he is convinced that he belongs to a system of worlds replete with animated existences, the workmanship of his Creator, of his God. What is the state physical or moral of those beings ; whether the events which have characterised the history of those beings have displayed any resemblance to the calamitous disobedience of Man ; whether the prospect of futurity opens on those worlds with views akin to those which it spreads before mankind ; whether there is found in any of those widely disjoined regions any knowledge of his existence, any sympathy towards him ; whether there have been received among them any tidings of his deplorable Fall, and of the stupendously merciful plan of his Redemption ;

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whether human transgression and human restoration to the Divine favour are there revealed as practical warning, as practical encouragement, to multitudes of beings individually stationed in their own modes of probation: these things he knows not. But his ignorance on all these points affects not, neither ought it to affect, his conviction, that man is not like a lonely wanderer in an interminable desert, dissociated from every other form of intellectual life: but that he is a link in a chain; that he is a member of a system of beings among the different parts of which there subsist close bonds of union, and amidst numerous diversities, features of general similitude. In this stage of his reflections, Revelation is at hand to supply to him additional information. The Divine Word imparts to him that he is the object of contemplation, and of lively interest, to the highest class of created beings; that the innumerable company of angels, the holy and exalted inhabitants of heaven regard him with unceasing solicitude; that they are all ministering spirits for his protection and welfare; that they are ardently desirous of his salvation, and rejoice in every token of

his penitence. Whether his own sin and its fatal consequences, and the glorious restoration purchased for him if he will yet be obedient, have been placed as a momentous lesson before other worlds of moral agents in a probationary state; whether the fall and the recovery of the human race are reserved to impress such a lesson in remote eternity on such agents yet uncreated, he still remains in ignorance. But his conjectures are not left without a rational bias. Revelation has disclosed to him the obedience and the disobedience respectively manifested in the angelic hosts, and the several consequences of each description of conduct; and in disclosing these facts has expressly avowed that they are *set forth* to man *for an example*. It is for an awful admonition to man that the inspired volume sets forth that the angels who kept their first estate of holiness, kept also their first estate of happiness; and that the angels who sinned are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgement of the great day: and thus makes manifest by proofs from another world, that *the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto*

*the day of Judgement to be punished.*¹ How reasonable then is it for him to conclude that the history of the human race, and the survey of its results of judgement and of mercy may be rendered most instructive lessons to other classes of beings amidst the endless ages of futurity!

After these statements and observations, the question whether the existence of evil can be compatible with the character of a God, who is identified with love, may fitly subject the objector to another question in return. Is he prepared with proof to demonstrate, that it is incompatible with the character of a Deity identified with love, to place created beings in a state of probation? If he has no such proof to produce, if he cannot demonstrate that these things are necessarily incompatible, I am entitled to assume the possibility that they may be compatible.

But this assumption, though on the ground now stated it may legitimately be made without the production of any additional argument in its support, will be found to gain strength

¹ Jude, 6. ² Peter, ii. 4. 9.

from the examination of reasonings likely to be advanced against it.

Why then, we ask, should it be necessarily inconsistent with the perfection of the Divine Love, to place created beings in a state of probation?

The answer returned perhaps may be, That perfect Love must desire the communication of the greatest happiness; and, when combined with Omnipotence, must be as able as desirous to impart it: and that such love would at once have imparted to some of the beings in question, whose success under probation is foreseen, the happiness ultimately designed for them, and would not have called the rest into existence.

On this answer it must be in the first place observed, that it takes for granted the very points on which its validity — if it possess any validity — depends. It takes for granted that the Deity, if perfect in love, must necessarily confer, and must confer at once, on each created being the greatest happiness which that being is capable of receiving. To maintain that proposition consistently with our knowledge of the Divine attributes is impossible. Suppose

that the qualities not of the great Creator and Governor of the universe, but of a human being, were the subjects of our investigation. Suppose a particular man to be perfect in valour — in character identified with valour — valour ever unshaken — ever looking round for opportunities of action, superior to every emergency actual or possible :—do you require this man, in order to show that his valour is perfect, to consult nothing but his valour ; to be continually exercising it to the uttermost, exclusively and without limit, wisely or unwisely, justly or unjustly ? Do you pronounce his valour imperfect if he does not thus exercise it ? Suppose the individual a perfect character in another quality also, say Justice. Must not the exercise of his valour stop, when it would interfere with the right exercise of Justice ? Would you pronounce his valour to be imperfect, because it then restrained itself ? Suppose him also perfect in love and in wisdom. Must not his valour pause in its exertions, when they would interrupt the right exercise of love or of wisdom ? In the same manner must not his love modify or withhold its manifestations, when they would counteract the

dictates of wisdom? Let us humbly apply this reasoning to the Divine attributes. In considering the perfections of God, while we discuss them separately, we are yet to estimate them conjointly. Each attribute is perfect, if so exercised as to leave every other uninterrupted in the perfection of its own right exercise. Each is perfect, if at every moment it fills its sphere of action up to the points of contact with the right action, at each moment, of every other attribute in its own sphere: points of contact which will be in perpetual variation according to the peculiarities of each particular case. Nor can it be doubted that higher glory will redound to God, and a larger amount of beneficence and happiness will result to his Creation, from the combined and harmonised exercise of all his infinite perfections, than would have ensued from the insulated exertion, however great, however extensive, of any single attribute.

In the next place, we cannot but advert to the preposterous and endless extravagance of the conclusions, to which the principle taken for granted by the objector inevitably leads. Perfect Love, as his argument implies and re-

quires, must necessarily confer, and must confer at once, on each created being the greatest happiness which that being is capable of receiving. If love being able, fails so to act, it is not perfect. If an Omnipotent God does not thus act, He is not Love. The disputant, whoever he may be, who shall bring forward such reasoning, will advance it, I trust, without being conscious that he is arraigning every part of the Divine proceedings known to man.

Among all created beings with which we have intercourse, there is not one which we may not rationally conclude to be capable with its existing faculties of enjoying a larger measure of present happiness than it possesses. It is obviously true of every human being. It appears equally true in all cases which our observation can reach, of animals inhabiting the earth, or the air, or the waters. And analogy justifies the same inference respecting those animated tribes whose obscurity or minuteness eludes our research. Therefore, pronounces the objector, God is not Love.

But every one of these beings might have been called into existence, and the enjoyment of complete happiness many ages ago, even in

the first ages, so to speak, of eternity ; and might still be enjoying it at the present moment with the prospect of unlimited continuance. Because these things are not so, God is not Love !

But manifestly there is room in the universe for an infinitely greater number of happy beings. Because they exist not, God is not Love !

But each particle of insensible matter might have been made sentient and happy. Because it is not so, God is not Love !

But each being might be placed in a higher station than that which he now occupies in the scale of existence, and thus be invested with a larger capacity of happiness. A dog might have been created a man ; a man made an angel ; an angel made an archangel ; an archangel, it may be, raised a step nearer towards his Creator. Because these things are not so, God is not Love !

But what if these things had been so ? Would the objector be silenced ? Would the principle which I am exposing have been satisfied ? Not in the smallest degree. That principle would now demand that the dog which

had been raised into a man should forthwith be elevated into an angel ; that the man who had become an angel, should instantly be stamped an archangel ; that the archangel who had been exalted into a loftier essence whose denomination has never vibrated on a mortal ear, should instantly attain a position nearer to Divinity. Would the demands of the principle then be fulfilled ? Fulfilled ! Commencing afresh with the lowest being in the scale, it would require the elevation of that being, and of every higher created being ; and never would find its work of complaint, or its vigour and activity in censuring impaired, until all created beings were raised to a perfect equality, and that equality as nearly as Omnipotence could arrange it on a level with the throne of God. Because these things are not so, God is not Love !

Is it needful to add another word on such outrageous and blasphemous absurdities ?

CHAP. V.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

ALTHOUGH the objection combated in the preceding Chapter may have been repelled, other difficulties of a kindred but more modified character will be alleged as conclusive against the proposition that God is Love.

Perfect love, it is affirmed, would not have called beings into existence in order to place them in a state of probation, foreseeing their fall.

To this affirmation we are now to attend.

It is not conceivable that the Deity can thoroughly approve beings who do not act according to his known pleasure. Obedience on the part of the agent must be the original groundwork of approbation on the part of God. Obedience, however, if abstractedly considered, might be divided into different imaginable kinds. It might be reluctant, rendered under the constraining influence of force or of fear. It is not with such obedience that the Deity could be well pleased. Or it might be involuntary

and mechanical, as little the result of choice and preference as the persevering motion of a planet in its appointed course. Neither could such obedience, if the being be capable of higher motives, be fully acceptable to God. Obedience, to be completely approved by a God who is Love, must proceed from the principle of Love. From that principle it might flow in beings replete by the gracious gift of their Creator from the first moment of their existence with holy and grateful love to Himself, and exempted from the capability of feeling the slightest temptation to evil. Surely on His own Divine image reflected in these pure Intelligences, the Author of their spotless excellence could not but look with complacency! There may yet be an obedience distinguishable by its own discriminating marks and circumstances from all the preceding descriptions: an obedience voluntary, the result of choice and preference, and flowing from the principle of Love; but manifested by beings placed in a probationary state, enabled to stand, yet free to fall. Such was the obedience of the holy angels: such was to be the obedience of all the angels who fell: such was to be the obedience of man, who fell also. Shall not such

obedience be acceptable to the Deity ? May it not have even some especial value in His sight ? Shall we presume to affirm that it is inconsistent with the character of a God who is Love, to place created beings in a state of probation ?

The objector may probably reply that his argument rests on the annexation of penal consequences to disobedience. Can there then be supposed a state of trial without the annexation of penal consequences to disobedience ? Can wilful opposition to the Divine will be permitted to continue perpetually, and with impunity ? “ It is on the infliction,” he answers, “ of pain, bodily or mental, on transgressors, that I rest my opposition to your doctrine. Perfect Love would not inflict pain.” What penalty would you tolerate ? “ Annihilation : annihilation only ; let the transgressor cease to exist.” In other words, let him lose the happiness which in his probationary condition he was enjoying. If then it be consistent with perfect love to take away existing happiness ; is it obvious that to impose pain in any case, and for any purpose, and in any degree, must be necessarily incompatible with perfect love in the Deity ? But farther ; Offences vary in their amount, in their

malignity. The laws of Draco punished every transgression with death ; and are reprobated by the common reason of mankind, not only for their sanguinary severity, but for their blind folly, their indiscriminating injustice. You require annihilation to be the sole penalty for offences against God. Is not your asserted lenity as blind as Draco's severity ? Is not your apathy in the punishment of the guilty as indiscriminate as his ferocity ? Assume that in the scale of offences there is a certain point at which annihilation would be the equitable penalty. If there be no such point, there is an end to your argument : but for the benefit of your reasoning we will assume that there is such a point. Suppose offences then to occur below that point. You will not contend that all such offences ought to be freely forgiven. To exempt them from punishment would be to encourage the offender to additional transgression ; and to promote sin, so far as the example should become known, throughout the universe. How then is perfect love to conduct itself ? Does it violate its own lustre, does it forfeit its characteristic essence, if instead of annihilation it imposes on such transgressors the minor penalty

of a certain portion of pain? Suppose the sin committed to reach the level of the point of merited annihilation? Would the Deity prove himself not to be a God of love, if harmonising, by means devised in His infinite wisdom, the exercise of mercy with His other attributes, he should mitigate the sentence of annihilation into that of some portion of suffering as preparatory to forgiveness? Proceed to higher offences; to acts of disobedience transcending in their guilt the level of penal annihilation, and rising one above another to successive stages of enormity? For these transgressors what is to be the appointed state? Because God is Love, is there to be no law of retributive justice in the divine administration of the universe; no apportionment of the measure of punishment to the measure of guilt? Whenever we witness a discussion concerning the nature and the effects of punishments inflicted by men, the grand imperfection admitted and lamented on all sides is the impossibility of adjusting the amount of penal infliction in due proportion to that of criminality. Do you reduce the moral government of an Omniscient and Omnipotent Deity within the limits resulting from the scantiness

of human knowledge, and the feebleness of human resources ?

“ The purpose,” replies the objector, “ of punishment in the hands of man is different from that which must be ascribed to a God of love when he punishes.” The difference perhaps may be less than under your first impression you may have concluded. What do you conceive must be the divine purpose in punishing ? “ To reform the offender.” And what the purpose of human punishment ? “ To protect society.” Recently you pronounced annihilation to be the proper penalty for the Deity to inflict upon transgressors of His law. Was the annihilation of an offender meant to reform him ? But has not human punishment, in carrying into execution its purpose of protecting society, a collateral design, in all cases in which the two objects can be united, of reforming the individual ? Human punishment is intended to protect society by three distinct modes of operation. It is to deter other wicked men from imitating the pernicious example of the criminal. It is to restrain, or, if necessity require, to disable him from pursuing his iniquitous course. It is to impress him, whenever the forfeiture of his

life is not indispensable, with aversion to the habits which have produced his suffering ; and thus to be a first step in rendering his heart less reluctant to listen to the suggestions of religion. In this last mode, then, of operation, human punishment seeks to attain, according to its measure of capability, the same object which has been ascribed to divine punishments — the reformation of the transgressor. And has not punishment, inflicted by the hand of God, in addition to its purpose of amending the transgressor, if permitted to continue in existence, the design also which has been attributed to human punishment, of protecting society — I speak in the first instance of earthly society and of divine chastisements poured forth on actual inhabitants of earth — from the workers of iniquity ? And do not divine chastisements operate, with whatever superiority of effect, yet in the very modes which have been stated as belonging to human punishments, by deterring others from imitating the example of the offender, and by restraining or disabling him from pursuing his evil course ? If proofs be required, open the Bible. Pursue the research from the widest visitations to the most circum-

scribed; from the destruction of the antient world by the deluge; from the fiery catastrophe of Sodom and Gomorrah, *making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly*¹; from the punishment, and final extinction in the wilderness of the disobedient generation of Israelites who had been *saved out of the land of Egypt*, down to the judgements recorded in the Old and in the New Testament, as executed upon individual transgressors: and you will find them steadily applied as warnings against sin to all generations, and to all persons, ourselves included, to the end of time. *All which things happened unto them for ensamples; and are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.*² But divine punishments, whether they are poured forth upon sinful men, or upon Angels who sinned; whether they fulfil their commission upon earth, or in some unknown region of infinite space; possess, in their office of repressing existing iniquity, and of guarding against its revival, an immeasurable range beyond the bounds of human society and the continuance of the globe on which we dwell.

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 5, 6. Jude, 5. 7.

² 1 Cor. x. 5. 11.

They look to the interests of the universe, and to those interests as pervading eternity. Whether they overtake human beings, or any other class of sinful agents; they were ordained to be solemn and momentous examples unceasingly to warn now, and throughout eternity, all existences placed, or hereafter to be created and placed, in states of probation, to be steadfast in perfect obedience, to the Lord of all, the Fountain of Holiness and of bliss.

To load a transgressor with punishment more than commensurate with his guilt, for the purpose of deterring other beings from becoming offenders, would be repugnant to the justice of God. But if to inflict upon an offender, of whatever class or rank in the creation, the degree of punishment which he has justly incurred would promote, by the influence of the example, holy obedience and blessedness, in the same province, or in other provinces, in the same period, or in subsequent periods, of the universe; would not every instance of the exaction of such punishment be not only compatible with the character of a God who is Love, but one among the proofs that he is Love?

CHAP. VI.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED.

A SEPARATE objection to the doctrine that God is Love has been deduced from the physical sufferings experienced by the inferior orders of animal existence upon the earth. "Man," exclaims the objector, "Man, according to your statement, has sinned and is punished; and you justify his punishment as merited by his guilt. But what say you to the lot of the innumerable millions of millions of the classes which you term irrational in animated life? How will you attempt to reconcile with your doctrine the pains endured by the beast, by the bird, by the fish, by the insect, by the very zoophyte in its atom of incipient sensation? How, on your principle, will you vindicate the ordained system, general, nay almost universal, throughout those various tribes, that they are to be from day to day sustained in existence by mutually preying one upon another; by the ceaseless infliction,

on the part of the stronger upon the weaker, of terror, anguish, and death? Will you pretend that these beings have sinned; that their sufferings are penal retribution? Prove the sufferings consistent, if you are able, with justice. Dream not of their compatibility with love."

Whatever may be the compatibility, or the incompatibility with justice or with love, points remaining for examination, of the distresses and pains which pervade the ranks of animated nature subordinate to man; the cause of all those sufferings is incontrovertible. All had their origin in human transgression.

When the Great Author of the world, at the close of successive days in the progress of creation, surveyed that which He had made; He testified that all was excellence, without blemish, without spot. When He had said, *Let there be light and there was light; God saw the light, and it was good.*¹ When he had formed the firmament, and had collected the dry land, and had gathered the seas into their place; *God saw that it was good.*² When he had clothed the earth with herbage, and with trees yielding fruit; *God saw that it was good.*³

¹ Gen. i. 3, 4

² Gen. i. 9, 10.

³ Gen. i. 12.

When he had formed the sun, and the moon and the stars, and had stationed them in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth, and to rule over the day and over the night, and to be for signs and for seasons, and for days and years; *God saw that it was good.*¹

When he had replenished the waters and the air with living creatures severally adapted to the element which they were appointed to occupy: *God saw that it was good; and God blessed them.*² *When He had made the beast of the earth after its kind, and cattle after their kind, and every thing that creepeth upon the earth after its kind; God saw that it was good.*³

And how were these countless multitudes to be sustained? Not by blood, not by mutual warfare, not by the infliction of pain. All were to be supported, like man their lord, by the vegetable productions of the earth. And God said, unto the human pair, *Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree in which is the fruit of a tree, yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the*

¹ Gen. i. 14. 18.

² Gen. i. 20. 22.

³ Gen. i. 25.

*earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth wherein there is life, I have given every green herb for meat. And it was so.*¹ The food assigned to the animal inhabitants of the waters is not specified: from analogy, however, we cannot but infer that they were to be nourished by means of subaqueous vegetation. The work of creation being now completed, the Almighty Maker of all things contemplated every part of his work. *God saw every thing that he had made: and behold, it was very good.*² All was perfect in its kind, and for its purpose. All was unbroken peace, unsullied excellence, uninterrupted happiness.

Thus it was in Paradise. Thus, had man retained his abode in Paradise, it would have now been over the whole earth. But when man transgressed, and like the Angels who sinned, kept not his first estate; not only was *the ground cursed for his sake*³, but the animal inhabitants of the earth, of the air, and of the waters, experienced a momentous change in their condition, extensive privations, and a

¹ Gen. i. 29, 30. ² Gen. i. 31. ³ Gen. iii. 17.

very large accession of unknown difficulties and sorrows. Though they had not partaken with man in sin, they became subjected through the sin of man to physical sufferings, similar in kind to those which were entailed upon man : to the severity of hunger and thirst, to bodily diseases and infirmities, to pain and danger in the production of their offspring, to laborious exertions in the search for food, to mutual hostility and devastation. I do not add that they become also subjected, by human transgression, to death ; because the Scripture contains no intimation that they were originally designed for a perpetuity of existence. Another part of their change of position consisted in the arrangement ordained very generally respecting them, that the life of each individual should be supported by preying upon the lives of others. Of the precise time when this new appointment commenced, we are ignorant. But perhaps we may not unreasonably suppose that it did not precede the deluge. For it was not until the waters of the flood were dried up, that God, addressing Noah and his sons as the representatives of the future generations of mankind, said unto them, *Every moving thing that liveth*

*shall be meat for you ; even as the green herb have I given you all things.*¹

From that time forward we may literally apply to the condition of the animal world the declaration of the Apostle : *We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth together in pain until now.*²

That a removal or a very great mitigation of the existing state of animal suffering shall take place upon the earth, and during a period of long continuance before the end of the world, is an expectation which appears to be countenanced by the word of God. Prophet after prophet announces that, during the millenium, when *the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ*³, most important ameliorations shall ensue to the temporal happiness of men. Expressions and passages of figurative and allegorical import, and referring, under the veil of earthly images, to things spiritual, are to be found in these predictions. But various declarations are specific as to the extinction of calamities most widely affecting the tranquillity and the comfort of in-

¹ Gen. ix. 3. ² Rom. viii. 22. ³ Rev. xi. 15.

dividuals and of society. War shall not be known. *They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his figtree, and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp: and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.*¹ Is it unreasonable to anticipate, with respect to such a season, a completion more or less literal of the accompanying predictions: *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed: their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox!*² Is it unreasonable to anticipate that the whole animal world shall partake

¹ Isaiah, ii. 4. Micah, iv. 3, 4.

² Isaiah, xi. 6. 9.

with man in the remission, or the removal of evil which the sin of man had entailed upon them?

The objection, however, is repeated and amplified. "How can you reconcile the sufferings of guiltless animals, and the affirmed origin of those sufferings in human transgression, either with love or with justice in the Deity? Speculate not concerning the future. Vindicate the past and the present."

To these points, Justice and Love, let us accompany the objector. There are, however, some preliminary considerations which it may be expedient to suggest.

When man, by expulsion from Paradise, was placed in a wholly new condition upon the earth, an extensive change prospectively in the state of the animal world appears to have been indispensable. Had no change been ordained, the two following consequences, deeply injurious to human welfare, or even destructive of it, must have ensued.

First. The precluding of men from the advantage, which experience proves to be invaluable, of animal service and labour.

Secondly. The inordinate and unchecked

multiplication of all the different species of animal life.

When God promised to the Israelites that he would destroy before them the nations inhabiting Canaan, He said, *I will not drive them out from before thee in one year, lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. By little and little I will drive them out from before thee.*¹ What then would have been by this time the multiplication of the beasts of the field against man; what the multiplication against him of all the other animal tribes, if their increase had not been perpetually encountered by their appointed habits of preying one upon another? The beasts of the field would have occupied the earth. The air would have been unfitted for respiration by swarms, become infinite, of insects. Under the existing system, the numbers of the beasts of the field are kept, one race by another, within bounds. The birds clear and purify the atmosphere. Man finds constant assistance from among the ranks of his enemies.²

¹ Exod. xxiii. 29, 30.

² Mr. Waterton, *Essays*, 2d. edit. p. 213., speaking of the ravages committed by the rat, observes that man, by his own efforts, with "the assistance which he receives

We proceed with the objector to the subject of Justice.

If a being be created and so stationed that, unless it be through its own wilful fault, it will derive from its existence a larger amount of pleasure than of pain ; no complaint on account of that being can be urged against the divine justice.

So far we are able to study the modes of animal existence, to discern the habits of the different sentient classes, and to appreciate the measures of happiness and of suffering assigned to these various beings ; we have no grounds for concluding that there lives a single animal to whom existence is not on the whole a blessing. On the contrary, we are authorised by the observation which we are capable of exercising, to cherish the additional conviction that generally, or universally, the balance, in the case of each individual, greatly preponderates on the side of happiness. Concerning that which is unknown, we must judge from that which is known. With regard to fishes, and

from his auxiliaries, the cat, the dog, the owl, the weasel, the ferret, and the founart, is enabled in some degree to thin its numbers and to check its depredations." To this band of allies, might be added the kite, the fox, and the stoat,

other tribes concealed in their subaqueous habitations from our notice ; and respecting those terrestrial classes which, through the minuteness of their size, or the obscurity or inaccessibility of their abodes, elude our research, we may fairly assume that the proportion of pleasure and of pain experienced by individual beings is analogous to that which, in the forms of animal life open to our notice, we have ampler means of estimating. It appears then to be the law of Providence, concerning the animal world, that the portion of time passed in pain by an individual being shall be very far less than that which is spent in comfort and enjoyment ; and that pain when acute shall be of brief continuance ; and, whether acute or moderate, shall not bear, in its collective amount, a comparison with the happiness which that being has received. A lark is chased by a hawk, and after various evolutions is overtaken, seized, and killed by its pursuer. You saw its terror ; you heard its outcries ; you witnessed its struggles and its destruction. Yet for each of those minutes of terror and of anguish how many days had it previously experienced of quiet enjoyment of food and freedom, in the

fields of corn, on the sunny downs, and in the grassy enclosure: how many mornings, and noons, and evenings, of rapture, in looking down upon its mate and its young, and pouring forth its song in the skies! In computing the sufferings of animals, we are apt to mislead our judgement by inferences deduced from our own mental constitution. We attribute human perceptions to the animal, and satisfy ourselves that it will suffer in any given situation as we should suffer under similar circumstances. No basis of reasoning is less accordant with facts: no conclusion can be more fallacious. Be it assumed that an animal when severely wounded, or when violently deprived of life, feels the torture as keen as it would be to a man. The real fact is certainly not so in the lower tribes of animal existence. They often seem to bear with little suffering inflictions which would be fatal or agonising to men. An insect will leave some of its limbs in the hand of the captor, and fly away apparently as before. Of a wasp, if cut in two, the fore-part, consisting of the head, the wings, and the legs, will for some time continue to move about with rapidity. If a worm be divided by a spade into two portions,

one of them, perhaps each, will become a perfect animal. If a polype be divided into many portions, each will grow into a living being similar to the original whole. But let the assumption be made. Still it would be too much to say that the animal always, or commonly, suffers equally with the man. The suffering of the animal is simply the present bodily pain. The corresponding bodily pain in the man is very frequently and grievously aggravated by mental anguish resulting from his apprehension or his foresight of consequences likely to ensue to others or to himself from his disabled state, or from his death. But with respect to the mass of ordinary suffering the difference is still greater in favour of the animal. The animal does not look forward. It anticipates not evil to come. It feels the sufferings of the moment; but thinks not of their continuance,— of their effects — of their recurrence. It feels, like a man, an internal throb: the throb is past, and speedily forgotten. The man knows that in his own case the throb may be the token of an inward malady which will harass him with torture through life. The bushes in which a bird found its shelter and its

food are cut down: it flies to a neighbouring thicket, and perceives the shelter as refreshing, and the food as abundant. A man driven from his settled dwelling, and from his established means of occupation and subsistence, sees or dreads that all his prospects are blighted beyond the possibility of recovery. The alarm which animals exhibit on the approach or under the suspicion of danger is, in a very large majority of instances, rather an instinctive caution than a painful fear. A hare feeding in a meadow hears a noise, or notices a peasant, and darts away with the rapidity of an arrow: but as soon as she has crossed the field, and has crept through the hedge into the adjoining enclosure, she begins to crop the herbage as before. You mark a butterfly sitting on a flower, and advance your finger. The insect is gone: it is drinking the juice from another flower half a yard from the former. In another particular, also, our views of the condition of animals, as to suffering, are liable to be erroneous. Pain discloses itself by outward manifestations which forcibly attract attention, by gestures, looks, and sounds of distress. Pleasure in most animals is ordinarily of a tranquil nature, and

wins little notice. A cow stung by a gadbee, or hearing but its distant hum, gallops round the pastures as though she were frantic : separated from her calf, or from her old companions, she fills the air with her lowings. But when she is feeding unmolested in the field, or quietly recumbent in rumination, the signs of her satisfaction are feeble in comparison with the demonstration of inquietude exhibited in the seasons of her discontent. Who can doubt, at the close of her life that she has reaped, during all her years of tranquillity, an amount of gratification abundantly overbalancing her incidental perturbations and ailments, inclusive of the sudden and short pang of death in a slaughter-house? Even the ass and the post-horse, the animals to which our thoughts naturally turn when we speak of sufferings inflicted on irrational creatures by the selfishness of unfeeling men ; even these examples and victims of evil treatment have enjoyed, during the progress of youth, years unconscious of the burthen and the scourge ; enjoyment laid up in store and noted down in the account-book of Justice to meet the subsequent troubles of mature and declining life. And those troubles, frequently interrupted by

long intermissions of hard labour, are also met habitually throughout the period of their prevalence by the positive comforts experienced in the constant recurrence of customary food and rest.

Had these arguments under the head of justice appeared inconclusive, there would have been found another in reserve to supply their defects. It must be acknowledged to be *within possibility*, that if the earthly existence of any given animal had not proved to it a positive benefit, the balance might be rectified by Omnipotence in the grant of a subsequent stage of being. The words of Holy Writ, though decisive against the moral responsibility of animals, might not of necessity forbid the idea of their surviving the stroke of death. I mean not to intimate an opinion that in any case they survive it. As little do I think the supposition necessary for the vindication of the divine justice. But did that attribute need a present vindication, the possibility to which I have alluded would furnish it.

From the statement and considerations vindicating divine justice against objections which arraign the conduct of the Deity in subjecting

the animal world to suffering, we are to proceed to shew that His conduct in that respect is not inconsistent with the proposition that God is Love.

The free gift of an existence which is on the whole a blessing to the individual being is a proof of love in the giver.

If we have reason to believe that, to every animal which exists, life is on the whole a blessing ; we have in every animal which exists a proof of love on the part of God.

That we have ample reason for the belief that, to every animal which exists, life is on the whole a blessing, is a truth which, as I apprehend, has been established in the present chapter. In every animal then which exists we have a proof of love on the part of God.

In corroboration of this argument, reflect on the singular care, precision, and kindness with which Divine Providence has formed and adapted the bodily frame and organs of every animal to the element, the station, the locality, which it is intended to occupy. To produce illustrations is needless. Every creature possessed of life and known to man is an example ; and by parity of inference, includes all living

creatures unknown to him. The observation extends to their several faculties. In the lower gradations of animal life, instinct may be the sole guide of the individual. In the higher classes, of whose habits and proceedings we have opportunities of taking cognisance, the power of reasoning, in different proportions and within certain limits, is unequivocally manifested. Let not human pride take alarm at the assertion. Let not the earthly head of the globe vauntingly and ignorantly exclaim, "All the tribes of living beings over which I am constituted the head are governed solely by the blind though sufficient impulse of instinct. I possess, I alone possess, reason. The exclusive possession of reason is my discrimination, my characteristic." Reason is not the exclusive possession of man. By the common Creator of man, and of all beings dwelling upon the earth, it is bestowed on various classes in a measure proportioned and adapted to their respective necessities.¹ On man it is bestowed

¹ Any accredited work entering in detail into the habits of animals will confirm the fact. I quote, as follows, from *Studies in Natural History*, by William Rhind, 2d edit. Edinburgh, pp. 165, 166. "A German artist, a man of strict veracity, states that, in his journey through Italy, he was an eye-witness to the following occurrence. He

in a measure of strength, of comprehensiveness, of diversity of application, incalculably surpassing that in which it is conferred on the animal world. But reason in a superior degree is not the characteristical discrimination separating man from the animal world. What is the characteristical discrimination? It is, that no being in the animal world is endowed with any faculty of religious perception, with any capability of knowing that there is a God. Man is born to know, to adore, to serve, and to love God. *Thus saith the Lord: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, but let him*

observed a species of beetle busily engaged in making for its egg a pellet of dung, which, when finished, it rolled to the summit of a small hillock, and repeatedly suffered to tumble down its side, apparently for the sake of consolidating it by the earth which each time adhered to it. During this process the pellet unluckily fell into an adjoining hole, out of which all the efforts of the beetle to extricate it were in vain. After several ineffectual trials, the insect repaired to an adjoining heap of dung, and soon returned with three of its companions. All four now applied their united strength to the pellet, and at length succeeded in pushing it out; which being done, the three assistant beetles left the spot, and returned to their own quarters." Mr. Rhind proceeds to relate a similar and equally conclusive circumstance, seen by himself, on the part of a beetle. If the beetle gives such evidence, what would be the testimony advanced by the horse, the fox, the dog, the elephant?

that glorieth glory in this; that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord

If then we are satisfied that in every animal which exists we have a proof of love on the part of God, let us pause to contemplate the immeasurable and inconceivable aggregate proofs of his love, thus furnished in the animal creation. A brief phrase disposes of the large quantities. Hence it may arise that we converse respecting immense numbers without having on the mind an adequate impression of their amount. The number of individuals of the human race now living on the earth is supposed to reach eight hundred millions. "A vast population!" we exclaim. Perhaps we shall have a stronger conception of its vastness if we attend to the following fact, which the multiplication table will speedily verify: that if a person would count this whole number one by one, advancing at the rate of sixty units in a minute, and pursuing his task regularly during eight hours every successive day; the time requisite for completing the sum would exceed seventy-six years. But what is the proportion of the human inhabitants of the globe to the

¹ Jeremiah ix. 23, 24.

other animated tribes? It is as one to infinity. When we attempt to compute the numbers of these existences, language and imagination at once sink beneath the effort. Go to the nearest pasture overspread with ant hillocks, and tell how many millions of that single race are reposing in those receptacles. Observe on a summer evening the cloud of gnats incumbent over half an acre of marsh; and tell the millionth part of their numbers. Hear Linnæus striving to express his astonishment, in departing from Lapland, at the continuity of the migrating armies of water fowl which covered, during eight succeeding days and nights, the surface of the river Calix. Survey the annual host of herrings approaching the isles of Shetland. "Its breadth and its depth are such as to alter the appearance of the very ocean. It is divided into distinct columns of five or six miles in length, and three or four in breadth."¹ See the sky curtained by locusts. View the living inundation of the leming. Expose to a powerful microscope a solitary drop of water, and try to enumerate the active animalcula which it includes. When you have pondered

¹ Pennant's *British Zoology*, 1776, vol. iii. pp. 336, 337.

on these few and slight specimens of an interminable series of similar illustrations, represent to yourself a computer counting at the rate of sixty units in a minute, and enabled to prosecute his labour during the four and twenty hours of each succeeding day; and ask yourself how many thousands, how many myriads, of years would be occupied in thus approximating towards the sum of individual beings of the animal creation at this moment existing in the earth, in the air, and in the waters. Every one of these existences is a living proof of love on the part of God. Have not we in this stupendous survey most powerful attestations that God is Love?

“The proof,” it will be replied, “is incomplete. Why is not the measure of happiness bestowed without the accompaniments and drawbacks of pain? To evince that God is Love, the happiness ought to be unsullied.” Not necessarily. Not if the present measure of qualified happiness be as large a gift to the irrational creation as can be bestowed, consistently with the amplest and wisest manifestation of love to the universe. Never are we to forget that the earth forms an extremely

small portion of the illimitable dominions of the Most High. Nor are we ever to forget that we have scriptural evidence for the conclusion that the events which take place upon this globe, and the scheme of divine administration displayed in this little province of his empire, as connected with human transgression and its consequences, are objects of the most earnest inspection, of the warmest interest, and of the most important instruction, to other ranks of intelligent beings. Is it possible for us, in our contracted sphere, and amid our short-sighted ignorance, to affirm that the subsisting amount of animal suffering resulting from the fall of man, and the very modes in which the suffering takes place (although, if the amount of pain be definite, the mode can offer no just ground of objection), may not be arrangements conducive to purposes of universal good? May not they be arrangements which, at the same time that they are entirely accordant, as already has been shewn, both with justice and with love to the animal creation subjected to them, are physically and morally adapted to the condition of man as a sinner? And both to man himself, whose guilt introduced them, and also to unseen worlds,

may not they be most salutary exemplifications of hateful and widely diffused effects of sin? May they not thus be among the means selected by wisdom which cannot err for the production of the largest amount of ultimate happiness; and be in themselves among the proofs that God is Love?

CHAP. VII.

PROOFS OF THE DIVINE LOVE TO MAN
ANTECEDENTLY TO THE FALL.

To the eye of Omniscience there is no unknown or distant futurity. There is in fact no futurity. *With the Lord a thousand years are as one day.*¹ By parity of reasoning, ten thousand or ten thousand millions of ages are with him as one day. When He created our first parents, He equally knew the state of holiness in which he created them; the condition of guilt and misery into which they would speedily plunge themselves and their posterity by disobedience; and the plan which His mercy had predetermined for their redemption by the *Lamb slain* for them in the divine counsels *from the foundation of the world.*² The love of God then, if it was to be exemplified in perfection towards man, was to be adapted and exercised in modes corresponding to the peculiarities of these successive conditions of the beings who were to be the objects of that love.

¹ 2 Peter, iii. 8.² Rev. xiii. 8.

Each of those states, taken in connection with the arrangements of the divine love displayed respecting it, will require separate consideration.

We are in the first place to regard man in Paradise.

Concerning the state of our first parents, as dwellers in the garden of Eden, a state of very brief continuance, the Scriptures enter not into details. It was like the morning dew that passeth away. But so long as the commandment of God was kept, it was a state of unsullied happiness. Man, stationed amidst scenes of exquisite beauty; needing no artificial shelter in a climate of congenial temperature; exempted from pain and from external violence; called to no labour which was not in itself a delight; invested with dominion over all the creation around him; honoured with the promise of a posterity which should multiply and overspread the earth; and assured of immortality in happiness if he should maintain his obedience to the Giver of all these blessings: man was a most eminent demonstration that God is Love.

But there was a contingency, an awful contingency. "If he should maintain his obedience!"

Adam and Eve were placed in a state of trial.

They were so placed from the beginning by their Creator. All his purposes are the determinations of Omniscience. When he fixed the newly formed pair in a state of trial, he foreknew the result.

That it is not necessarily incompatible with the perfection of divine love in the Creator to call into existence a class of beings, that their obedience may be manifested under probation, and that its wilful failure may be visited with deserved punishment, is a position which has been discussed in a former chapter, and, as I apprehend, has been rationally established. A state of probation implies the possibility of failure in the beings subjected to the trial. If all the circumstances constituting and accompanying the appointed trial are compatible with perfect love on the part of God, the result, whatever it be, may not only be consistent with the amplest measure of love which could rightly be exercised, antecedently to the trial, or subsequently, towards the beings in question; but may be a most appropriate and an efficacious instrument in the hands of a God of love for illustrating his counsels; for confirming obedience to his laws; and for immeasurably increasing

happiness by the example thus displayed before the dwellers in countless worlds throughout the universe. It may be a proof throughout eternity, and to all creation, that God is Love.

If then we should consider a state of probation abstractedly, what are the circumstances which, so far as we may presume to judge, we should deem essentially connected with it if it be ordained by a God of Love? We might reply, that the appointed trial should be adapted to the faculties of those on whom it would attach; that it should be definite; simple; fully intelligible; and distinctly made known beforehand, and with all its consequences, to the beings exposed to it; that they should be exempted from all extraneous compulsion or constraint towards disobedience; that the trial should not exceed the strength previously granted, or avowedly ensured, if sought, to the tempted individuals; that the rewards annexed to obedience should be abundantly encouraging; that disobedience, if it should ensue, should be voluntary, and chosen with open eyes.

We turn to Adam and Eve in Eden. What was their condition as to the several particulars which have been enumerated?

The purpose and the essence of every trial ordained for man on the part of God are to constitute it a test whether, as to the point of trial, the individual will prefer obedience to the authority and the clearly understood will of his Creator to the gratification of his own desire. Under this point of view, the medium of trial, however important with reference to attendant characteristics already enumerated, is immaterial. Wilfully to pick up a prohibited feather, or to snatch at the crown of an empire, would equally prove rebellion in the heart against God. But in the trial of our first parents, all the accompanying circumstances were adjusted beforehand with the most gracious care. Various objects which, at this day, would be temptations to human desire, were unknown, or would have been wholly indifferent to inhabitants of Paradise. What could have been more appropriate than the selected object of prohibition? *Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat.*¹ Could any object of trial have been more thoroughly simple and definite? The fruit of one single tree. Observe that it was not the fruit of one particular species

¹ Gen. ii. 17.

of tree of which there might be a number of individuals dispersed in the garden of Eden. It was the fruit of one tree, the only tree of its species, and placed centrally and conspicuously *in the midst of the garden*.¹ The very sight of the tree was a perpetual memento against transgression. The penalty of disobedience was previously announced, and was also plain and definite. *In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt die. Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die*.² The recompense of obedience, the permanence of that state of felicity the fulness of which they were experiencing, was equally distinct and certain. The power of external violence on the part of the tempter was wholly out of the question. And allurements could not succeed but by the decided and free assent of the tempted. Could more have been expected? *God is Love!*

¹ Gen. iii. 3.

² Gen. ii. 17. iii. 3.

CHAP. VIII.

PROOFS OF THE DIVINE LOVE TO MANKIND
SUBSEQUENTLY TO THE FALL.

THE expulsion of the offenders from Paradise was the immediate, and requisite consequence of their transgression. Yet in the very judgment which the Almighty pronounced on the guilty pair three signal manifestations of mercy emanating from His persevering Love were interwoven. In the first place, a solemn promise was given of a future Deliverer, ordained to remove the evil brought upon the world by that malignant spirit, who under the assumed form of the serpent had withdrawn Adam and Eve from their allegiance to their God. Secondly, this Deliverer would be the offspring, and the offspring in some mysterious and special sense, of the woman, who had been foremost in yielding to the wiles of Satan, and the instrument of beguiling her husband into the same sin. Thirdly, the execution of the sentence, *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou*

return, was delayed: and the intimations given concerning the future Deliverer, and also respecting the labour and sorrow which should attend the cultivation of the earth by Adam for his subsistence, implied that Death might not be near at hand; that space would be granted for deep remorse and contrition to work upon the heart; and that in the unbounded compassion of the Most High means might be vouchsafed through which true repentance might be attainable, and might not be in vain in the eyes of a heart-searching God. We know that life was mercifully protracted in the case of Adam and of successive generations of his posterity to the length of many centuries.

While a most afflicting example of the corruption of human nature, a tremendous demonstration of the loss of the holy image of God in the soul of man, was exhibited in the family of Adam when Abel was murdered by his brother; the acceptance of Abel and of his sacrifice was a most encouraging attestation that grace was not denied to the fallen race of man. At the same time the punishment of the murderer, not by a sudden stroke cutting him off from the earth, from the eyes and from

the thoughts of men, but by a continued judgment speaking aloud during the life of Cain to every contemporary individual, proclaimed the sanctity and the steadfastness of the Divine justice, and the certainty of the doom that would await every unrepenting sinner. It appears incontestable that the shedding of the blood of animals in sacrifice as exhibited by Abel—a practice thus shown to be nearly coeval with the existence of the human race, yet so little likely to have suggested itself to the family of Adam as in any way pleasing to God, especially as the flesh of animals was not granted to man for food—must have been an institution commanded of God, and opening a prospective view to that Great Redeemer, who should take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

From the time therefore when our first parents were removed from the Garden of Eden, they were placed as sinful beings in a state of penal probation, cheered by animating indications of attainable mercy. Their posterity inheriting their corrupted nature, were to be continued under a corresponding condition of trial.

Before we proceed to investigate the proofs of

the Divine Love towards man in the progressive preparations for the appearance of the predicted Redeemer, and in the complete developement of the plan of Redemption when he descended from heaven to dwell in human nature upon the earth ; the more convenient course will be to notice the manifestations of that Love in the powers and faculties granted to man, and in the nature and the arrangements of the external objects with which he was now to be conversant.

Man found himself exposed to vicissitudes of seasons, against which the protection of clothing and of shelter were requisite. The Divine compassion had already indicated means of supplying the first of these wants ; and the recesses of the woods would offer a present provision for the other. Man was under the necessity of procuring food by labour : and experience speedily showed that he was endued with strength and knowledge, and opportunities adequate for the purpose. He was surrounded by the animal creation, still subjected to his dominion, and retaining a large portion of the fear of him originally impressed upon them ; yet now become in most instances subjects of precarious allegiance, and in many of harassing

or dangerous hostility. The smaller tribes infest his abodes, plunder his stores, injure his crops; a larger race invades his flocks and herds; and the more savage kinds glare upon him with an eye of defiance as he passes along, and will not hesitate to attack him when they are goaded by hunger, or irritated by his intrusion into their haunts. Still, however, by forethought and skill, and by concentration of force, he maintains his superiority. The dwellers in the wild give place before him: even the most powerful fly, or are progressively destroyed as he advances. Fallen as he is, Heaven sustains him in the substance of his primeval dominion over the other inhabitants of the globe. No living being which he has had occasion to encounter has proved capable of withstanding him. *Every kind of beasts and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed (subdued) and hath been tamed of mankind.*¹ Various species of animals, — as the cow, the horse, the camel, the reindeer, the majestic elephant, — he has trained by domestication to minister most usefully to his support, or to his convenience. In the dog he has gained a watchful guard, and an attached and eminently

¹ James, iii. 7.

serviceable associate and ally. And such, with respect to the irreclaimable species of the animal race, are the hardihood and the sagacity which man is qualified by his Creator to attain; that amidst the relative feebleness of his frame as to muscular vigour and activity, and its destitution of natural instruments of offence, an individual will assail, single-handed and victoriously, the bear in the den, the lion in the desert, and the shark in the ocean.

It is unquestionably true that toil, certainty of toil, and also that frequency of disappointment attend all the proceedings of man; that pain and sickness and grief chequer his days; and that the inevitable termination is death. He experiences the execution of the sentence, *Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life: thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken.* And he complains that for three thousand years he has found the ordinary duration of his life, the space for improvement under trial, reduced to less than a tenth of the period granted to Adam and to many subsequent generations.

To advert, in the first instance, to this complaint of the curtailment of human life.

The fitness of the length assigned to a term of probation is not to be measured by the greater or the less number of years which it occupies. The true criterion is this: Is the term amply sufficient, under the actual circumstances of the case, to prove the habitual desire and state of the heart of the individual; to evince whether he remains unmoved by the Divine mercy, and wilfully abandons himself to irreligion and sinful indulgences, or faithfully strives under the grace set before him to be *turned from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God*? When the fall of the first pair was recent, a very protracted delay of the stroke of death might reasonably act upon the minds of themselves and of their immediate descendants as a merciful encouragement to the hope that they should signalise, under a long course of steadfast obedience, their abhorrence of sin, and their solicitude to be pardoned and accepted by their Creator. But when the world before the flood gave itself up recklessly and determinately to wickedness; when *because sentence against an evil work was not speedily executed, therefore*

*the heart of the sons of men was fully set in them to do evil*¹; when the probable remoteness of death was perverted into a constant incitement to perseverance in transgression: it became an act of kindness, a token of love, in the Supreme Being gradually and effectively to diminish the duration of human life. The limits within which, since the days of David, it has been circumscribed afford abundant room for the final developement of the character. And we have complete assurance that as to every particular connected with those limits, in the case of each individual, every allowance which equity can suggest will be manifested from the throne of Judgement. *The Judge of all the earth will do right.*

Labour, and disappointments, and sorrows, are the lot of man. *Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upwards.* Are these appointments inconsistent with Divine Love? No. What could be more injurious to an unholy being than idleness; than continual leisure for temptation and unrighteous pursuits? Look to experience. Look to the idle. Are they *the excellent of the earth*? Are they the most virtuous portion of

¹ Eccles. viii. 11.

the community? Are they the men who are the most beneficial to their neighbourhood and to their country? Are they the men distinguished for *denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world?* Then, with respect to disappointments and sorrows. Consider their object. Their tendency is constantly to press upon our remembrance that we are sinners placed under a merciful dispensation of trial; to teach us that our present abode is not our home; to lead us to set our affections on things above; to strive through the grace offered to us for an inheritance in eternal blessedness. *Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. It is better to go to the house of mourning than to the house of feasting, for that is the end of all men: and the living will lay it to heart. By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better. Thou shalt also consider in thine heart that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee. Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the Lord thy God to walk in His ways and to fear Him. Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom He re*

*ceiveth. As many as I love I rebuke and chasten : be zealous therefore and repent.*¹ In the case of all true servants of Christ, the declaration of the Apostle concerning the persecuted Christians in his days shall be verified: *Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal : but the things which are not seen are eternal.*²

Should any person, objecting to the preceding statement, contend that the aggregate amount of disappointments and troubles in human life is greater than is necessary for the accomplishment of the purposes alleged ; due consideration of the two following circumstances may reasonably suffice to alter his opinion. First, a very large proportion of that amount is produced, not by the arrangements of Providence, but wholly by the wilful proceedings of men : by their determined indulgence of evil and malignant passions, of envy,

¹ Psalm cxix. 67. Rev. iii. 19. Eccles. vii. 2, 3. Deut. viii. 5. Heb. xii. 6.

² 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

and ambition, and pride, and covetousness, and deceit, and sensuality, and of every form of worldliness and selfishness. The more closely you examine this statement in the details, by which your reflection will show that it might be illustrated, the more clearly will you be satisfied as to its truth. Thus of persons labouring under habitually bad health before old age has brought forward its infirmities, what numbers owe their ailments not to constitutional weakness, but to intemperance or other misconduct ! Of individuals and families reduced to poverty, on how many has the distress been inflicted by extravagance on their own part, or by evil proceedings of others towards them ! Of the secret anxieties and cares which corrode the bosoms of multitudes, how great is the proportion which arises from the consciousness of sinful practices formerly indulged or still continued ; or from the apprehension of injury from unprincipled conduct experienced or dreaded from other men ! Then look to the varied miseries attendant on war ; miseries extending far and wide over both the contending parties, — over the party on whose side the hostility is that of aggression, over the other party

who are compelled to resort to arms in order to repel aggression. Charge not an atom of any of these classes of suffering upon Providence. Secondly, The amount of which complaint is made is practically shown by the records of history, and by the existing state of the world, not to have been, nor at present to be, such as to prevent the rapid extension of population, the continual progress in each branch of art and science conducive to the private and the public accommodation and welfare of mankind, and to the universal improvement of human society ; nor to hinder, as is most deeply to be deplored, the general prevalence of irreligion and wickedness. The measure of labour and affliction appointed by Providence to man is a distinct manifestation of love on the part of God. And this character is the more strongly stamped upon tribulation by the unexpected and seemingly improbable deliverances which He frequently vouchsafes to the distressed, even to the flagrantly unrighteous ; and by the inward consolations with which He cheers and sustains His true servants under their sorrows, — the peace of God which passeth all understanding

the peace which the world neither can give, nor can take away.

An accession to the proofs of Divine Love still exercised towards man is derivable from the consideration of the intellectual powers and capacities continued to man in his present state. If he were left possessed only of such a measure of mental endowments as would be requisite to meet the current demands and wants of life, and to secure the general enjoyment of reasonable comfort, the attribute of Love would stand clear from grounds of impeachment. How much more powerfully does it vindicate itself, when it points beyond the range of those ordinary wants and enjoyments to the scientific attainments and the pleasures of intellect which are not only within the reach of man, but are largely possessed by him, and to an extent constantly spreading itself on every side, and without discernible limitations! He explores the composition and dives into the hidden properties of material substances. He analyses the chemical constituents of the water which he drinks, the elementary ingredients of the air which he breathes. He draws down the lightning from the clouds. By his optical com-

binations he brings distance into vicinity. He pushes his researches among worlds removed by hundreds of millions of miles from the globe to which he is fixed. He constrains the planets severally to reveal to him the distances of one from another, from the sun, and from the spot where he is standing; and to disclose with scrupulous accuracy the length of their days and of their years. He computes their bulk, he calculates their weight, he ascertains the form and measures the circumference and the very aberrations of their orbits. He predicts the return of the comet rushing in its trackless career: and with unerring precision announces, fifty years beforehand, to a day and an hour and a minute and a second, the eclipse of an inconsiderable satellite.

The continued possession, then, of the intellectual powers and capacities productive of these and similar results, and of the temporal advantages and of the high mental gratifications arising from them, is one among the eminent proofs of Divine Love to man. But to say no more would be to leave this branch of the subject not only imperfect, but devoid of its most important and most beneficial character-

istics. Every one of those results is an additional discovery of the power, the wisdom, and the goodness of the Great Creator and Disposer of all things, *from whom cometh every good and perfect gift* ¹; and thus demonstrates itself to be both designed and adapted to lead men to adore, to love, and reverently to fear and obey Him; to train them onward habitually in religious improvement; to conduce to the accomplishment of that momentous purpose for which the state of human probation was graciously appointed, the reconciliation of repentant sinners to God through the Great Redeemer, and their future and eternal establishment in *a state of blessedness and glory. Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the Lord.* ²

¹ James, i. 17.

² Psalm cvii. 43.

CHAP. IX.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED WITH RESPECT
TO RELIGIOUS DISPENSATIONS.

IF *God is Love* towards the human race in their present fallen condition, we may anticipate that the clearest demonstration of the fact will be found in his proceedings bearing directly upon the point the most important to men, their eternal salvation. On that inquiry we are now to fix our attention.

Before we enter upon the consideration of the dealings of God with men severally under the different dispensations of religion, under successive disclosures, Antediluvian, Patriarchal, Jewish, and Christian, of revealed truth through which He has conducted men to the present hour; we may seasonably refer to one leading appointment of His providential care, one immutable attestation of His holy purposes, one decisive proof that He is Love, which has equally characterised and pervaded all those dispensations. It is this: that obedience to His laws has always had, as it has at this moment, a

settled and an indisputable tendency to promote the present happiness of every individual, and disobedience to produce unhappiness. This result, confirmed by universal experience, is scripturally and immutably established on the difference between *the works of the flesh and the fruits of the Spirit*.¹ Can there be found a man to maintain that *licentiousness and impurity, that thieving, covetousness, drunkenness, reviling, extortion, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, revellings*, conduce to the happiness of individuals, of families, of society? Can a question exist whether *love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*, are not main ingredients in public and private comfort,—main supports of public and private welfare? Is it not an incontestable proof not only of the holiness of God but of the divine love to men that, in the fixed arrangements of His Providence, He has caused those things, of which He has solemnly announced that *whosoever does them shall not inherit the kingdom of God*, to be sources of present wretchedness, as an admonitory warning to

¹ 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Gal. v. 13—24.

transgressors: and righteous conduct, which alone can lead to the gift of eternal happiness from our Redeemer, to be accompanied throughout its progress by the cheering conviction that *godliness is profitable unto all things; that it has the promise of the life which now is, as well as of that which is to come.*¹

The narrative contained in the book of Genesis of the events which took place between the death of Abel and the deluge is so brief that large details cannot be expected as to the particular exemplifications by which, during that period, the love of God towards men was displayed. But we are by no means left without specific and signally impressive instances of its manifestations both in encouragements and in warnings. *Enoch walked with God. And he was not, for God took him.*² A righteous man exempted from the general sentence pronounced upon the human race: exalted at once from the earth to the kingdom of God without passing through the valley of the shadow of death! What a demonstration to the world of the divine approval of holiness. What an assurance that blessedness beyond the power of

¹ 1 Tim. iv. 8.

² Gen. v. 25.

imagination is reserved in a future state of existence for every follower of holiness! In the progress of the ante-diluvian history, *when all flesh had corrupted its way upon earth*, we learn that *the earth was filled with violence*¹; that is to say, with rapine, confusion, insecurity, and wretchedness. Here we have an incidental testimony to the truth brought forward in the early part of this chapter, that, by the settled arrangements of Providence, sin is the parent of misery in the present life. When the wickedness of men drew forth the declaration, *I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth*; Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. Why did Noah find grace? *The Lord said unto Noah; Come thou and all thy house into the ark: for thee have I seen righteous before me in this generation.*² Here we have another proof that God fails not to regard the righteous; a proof that *the Lord*, when he reserves the wicked unto the day of Judgement to be punished, knoweth how to deliver the godly.³ The divine love, however, had been specially exercised in the most open and comprehensive manner towards that pre-eminently corrupt ge-

¹ Gen. vi. 11. 13. ² Gen. vii. 1. ³ 2 Peter, ii. 5. 9.

neration. They had received a warning from heaven one hundred and twenty years beforehand of the impending judgement. They had been assured that this period of one hundred and twenty years was mercifully granted to them, as a term of trial whether they would turn unto God. And God was pleased graciously to appoint means singularly adapted to their intended objects of keeping the warning and the assurance in universal and perpetual recollection, and of rousing men to repentance, to be in operation during this momentous interval. The means were three. The first of them, without which the others would have been of no avail, was the continued striving of the Holy Spirit, by his inward grace, against the corruption of the human heart. The declaration of God, *My Spirit shall not always strive with man*, shall not strive for an unlimited period; *yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years*, included an evident promise that during those years the striving of the Divine Spirit should not be withdrawn. The two remaining means were committed to the instrumental agency of one human individual. Who was that individual? Noah. What were the means? One of them was the admonitory voice

of Noah himself. He was constituted a *preacher of righteousness*¹, that he might summon the inhabitants of the world to consider their ways, to renounce their iniquities, to embrace the offered mercy while the day of grace yet remained. Nor would we doubt that there were numbers to whom the preaching would be blest unto salvation; to whom an entrance into everlasting peace was granted before the flood came upon the obstinately irreclaimable world of the ungodly. The second of the means appointed to Noah was the building of the ark designed for the preservation of himself and his family; but intended, also, throughout the progress of the work, to call a sinful generation to reflection and repentance. The construction of so immense a fabric necessarily occupying many years; necessarily and constantly visible to the dwellers in the surrounding region, while fame was spreading the tidings far and wide; its unexampled singularity; the uniformly declared purpose of its erection; the perseverance of Noah unabated amidst sneers and scoffs from unbelieving multitudes, while thus *by faith, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, he pre-*

¹ 2 Peter, ii. 5.

*pared an ark to the saving of his house ; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*¹ What could be more mercifully calculated to excite men to deep contrition and to earnest endeavours under divine grace to escape the wrath about to come ?

We advance to Patriarchal times.

Indications of the divine love attended and followed the descent of Noah and his family from the ark. The original grant to man of dominion over the whole animal creation was renewed. *The fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every fowl of the air, and upon all that moveth upon the earth, and upon all the fishes of the sea : into your hands they are delivered.*² The probable apprehensions of men that another deluge might arise and sweep them from the surface of the globe, were anticipated and obviated. *I will establish my covenant with you : neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood, neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.*³ Was not this solemn assurance sufficient ? In condescension to human distrust-

¹ Heb. xi. 7. ² Gen. ix. 2. ³ Gen. ix. 9—11.

fulness and to human usages, the Almighty vouchsafed to institute a perpetual sign, to be a pledge that He, the God of truth, would never be unmindful of his engagement. *I do set my bow in the clouds : and it shall be a token of the covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud. And I will remember my covenant which is between me and you, and every living creature of all flesh : and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh.*¹

In the mode of chastising the presumptuous and rebellious purpose of erecting the tower of Babel, love on the part of God towards men was manifest. He did not destroy one even of the principal offenders. He did not send painful inflictions upon any offender. He simply introduced diversities of languages among them ; and thus, by confusion of speech, constrained the multitude not only to abandon their undertaking, but to separate into distinct masses, as the individuals in each found themselves and their neighbours mutually intelligible ; and forwarded his gracious purpose of

¹ Gen. ix. 12—17.

spreading the settlements of men and the rudiments of nations over the face of the earth.

The period was now arrived in which a larger developement of the plan of redemption by the mysterious seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head, was to be granted. It commenced with the Patriarch Abraham.

The wisdom of the Almighty had predetermined to raise among the generations of mankind a people which should be in a peculiar manner set apart to Himself; brought near to Himself; dedicated and devoted by a special covenant to Himself; honoured and sustained by unexampled mercies, so long as they should be faithful in obedience to their Divine Benefactor; yet liable to signal chastisements, and to the loss of all their distinguishing privileges, if they should ungratefully refuse to keep His commandments. This people was to be the depository of express revelations of the divine will; the earthly guardian of pure religion; a light amidst the darkness of an idolatrous world; and the instrument in the hands of God for preparing that world, while they were themselves mercifully receiving a similar preparation, for the coming of the promised Re-

deemer, whose human descent was appointed to proceed from their race. Of this chosen nation Abraham was to be the immediate forefather. He received from God repeated assurances that from him should descend a posterity countless as the stars of heaven, who should possess the land of Canaan for their inheritance ; that his name should be great ; that he should be a blessing ; that in him and in his seed¹ should all the families of the earth be blessed. To Isaac, by the typical offering of whom on Mount Moriah, not only was the faith of Abraham openly proved, but the sacrifice of our Lord on the cross was prefigured, the promise of being the ancestor of the Messiah was carried forward ; and was subsequently assigned in succession to Jacob, to Judah, and to David.

The deliverance of the people of Israel from the bondage of Egypt was followed by the communication of the Law to them from Mount Sinai, proclaimed with unexampled and majestic impressiveness. It was replete with ordinances and institutions typifying daily the future atonement and offices of the Redeemer ;

¹ Gen. xxii. 18.

and precluding all facility of intercourse or contact with surrounding idolaters. After their departure from Sinai the Israelites were preserved to the end of forty years in the wilderness by continual miracles. To similar interpositions of the uplifted arm of God they were wholly indebted for their establishment in the land of Canaan. Have we not here most eminent proofs of divine love? They were the more astonishing, because the conduct of the Heavenly Benefactor of the race of Abraham was one continued display of long-suffering kindness towards rebellious ingratitude and most audacious provocation. The same description may be extended throughout the eventful series of vicissitudes which marked their history until the appearance upon earth of their expected Messiah.

In the mean time God had been graciously preparing the Israelites, by the unwearied voice of prophecy, for the manifestation of this great Deliverer in the midst of them. From age to age, in succession, chosen men inspired by the Holy Ghost arose not merely to rebuke transgressors, to enforce righteous practice, or to announce the purposes of God respecting

some existing crisis in the concerns of the nation ; but, mainly, to predict the leading circumstances which should characterise the Redeemer, and the immeasurable blessings which He would ultimately confer on the twelve tribes of Israel, and on all the kingdoms of the earth. Under every dispensation *the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*¹ : the universal object of prophecy is to make known and to glorify the Saviour. Prophecy announces him as the offspring of a virgin mother ; declares the place and the period of his birth ; his wonderful works ; his sorrows ; his sufferings ; his death. Then changing its tone to sounds of stupendous import, it proclaims him as the Great Being who in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth, and of whose hands the heavens are the workmanship ; by whom all things were created, visible and invisible, the Son of God ; the Mighty God ; God with us.

¹ Rev. xix. 10.

CHAP. X.

THE LOVE OF GOD IN REDEMPTION.

THE plan of human redemption is set before us in the Scriptures not only as the consummation of the divine mercy towards men, but as an exemplification of love so wonderful as to exceed in its fulness the grasp of our conceptions.

In this was manifested the love of God towards us; because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

Herein is love: not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.¹

God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.²

When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet

¹ 1 John, iv. 9, 10.

² John, iii. 16.

peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.¹ You that were sometime alienated and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of his flesh through death.² God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ.³ Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God.⁴

It may be desirable to adduce some additional passages among the scriptural declarations in which the procuring cause of pardon, of justification, of sanctification, of an inheritance in the kingdom of heaven for fallen man, is exclusively pronounced to be the voluntary and atoning sufferings and death of our Redeemer, accepted through the unbounded love of God as an adequate ground for the granting of all those blessings.

¹ Rom. v. 6. 10.

² Coloss. i. 21, 22.

³ Eph. ii. 4, 5.

⁴ 1 John, iii. 1.

*Bekold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world.*¹

*Neither is there salvation in any other : for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved.*²

*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God ; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood.*³

*Being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. We also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*⁴

*It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell : and having made peace through the blood of his cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.*⁵

*Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins should live unto righteousness : by whose stripes ye were healed.*⁶

*I lay down my life for the sheep.*⁷

¹ John, i. 29.

² Acts, iv. 12.

³ Rom. iii. 25.

⁴ Rom. v. 9, 11.

⁵ Coloss. i. 19, 20.

⁶ 1 Pet. ii. 24. See Isaiah, liii.

⁷ John, x. 15.

*Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.*¹

*Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, but with the precious blood of Christ.*²

*We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all.*³

*The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.*⁴

*Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*⁵

Such are the announcements of our Lord and of His apostles upon earth. What is the language of Heaven?

And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts ⁶ (living creatures) and in the midst of the elders stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns, and seven

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 9.

² 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

³ Heb. x. 10.

⁴ 1 John, i. 7.

⁵ Rev. i. 5, 6.

⁶ The term *beasts* is a most inappropriate and unhappy rendering of the original *ζωα*, living creatures, emblematical representatives of the universal church of Christ. *Full of eyes before and behind and within: and they rest not day and night saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.* Rev. iv. 6. 8.

eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth. And He came and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne. And when He had taken it, the four living creatures and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of Saints. And they sang a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation: and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth." And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many Angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the elders, and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice; "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and strength and honour and glory and blessing." And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying; "Blessing and honour and glory and

power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever.' And the four living creatures said, "Amen." And the four and twenty Elders fell down and worshipped Him that liveth for ever and ever.¹

In reflecting on the sufferings of our Lord throughout the period of His continuance in our nature upon earth, we ought never to lose sight of a circumstance to which we should pay deep attention in the case of an individual of the human race — the dignity of the sufferer. What is the incidental dignity of any human being, of Patriarch, Prophet, Saint, in comparison with the inherent majesty of the Eternal Son of God ! Submission on His part even to slight suffering would have been incalculable humiliation, incalculable mercy and love. But the language in which the Scriptures describe the whole amount of anguish which our Lord underwent for the redemption of the world, is characteristic of intensity of pain and distress. He was pre-eminently *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. His visage was marred more than anyman, and his form more than the sons of men.*² It was not, however, by the severity of those trials, great

¹ Rev. v. 6. 14.

² Isaiah, liii. 3. lii. 10.

as it was, concerning which the Scriptures enter the most into details, that the keenest darts of his sorrows and his grief were infixed. It was not by the obstinate unbelief of the Jews, by the constant machinations of his enemies for his destruction, by the vacillation and unfaithfulness of his disciples, by the treachery of Judas, by the denials of Peter, by the iniquity of Pilate, and the brutality of the Roman soldiers. It was not by the pains of the Cross; pains which might not be in themselves more acute than those endured by the malefactor on either side. He had undertaken to be the representative of sinners. It was appointed that a feeling of the most awful part of the doom in reserve for sinners, the withdrawing of the light of God's countenance, the being cast off by the Most High, should at times be experienced by Him *on whom the Lord laid the iniquity of us all.*¹ Hence the agony of Gethsemane. Hence the despairing exclamation on the cross, *My God! My God! Why hast thou forsaken me?*²

¹ Isaiah, liii. 6.

² There are various passages in the Psalms, as illustrated by Bishop Horsley in his translation and the accompanying notes, which appear prophetically to indicate that our sinless Redeemer would be called on different occasions to sustain these *terrors of the Lord*. See Psalm lxxxviii.

The energy of the Divine Love is manifested in the amount of the provocations which it pardons. To the sinfulness, the corruptions, the continual rebellions of the human heart, in every period of the world, reference has already been made.

But still farther; the love of God is magnified by its unbounded comprehensiveness.

Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways: for why will ye die? ¹

God our Saviour would have all men to be saved. ²

Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life. ³

Christ was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. ⁴

We are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ⁵

Jesus Christ the righteous is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. ⁶

¹ Ezek. xxxiii. 11.

² 1 Tim. ii. 4.

³ John, v. 40.

⁴ John, i. 9.

⁵ Hebr. x. 10.

⁶ 1 John, ii. 1, 2.

*We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man.*¹

*Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.*²

Thus universal is the love of God. There is no exclusion, no rejection. No man is overlooked, no man is forsaken, no man is passed by. Every man has sinned : for every man the Son of God has suffered. To every man, through the sufferings of the Son of God, is grace vouchsafed sufficient to enable him to attain salvation.

Not only are all these blessings spontaneously provided by the Divine Love for mankind, and offered to every individual ; the matchless condescension of God proceeds still farther. The Father against whom we rebelled, the Son who of His own free love came down from heaven and died for us, the Holy Ghost addressing us by his inspired messengers the apostles, unite, as it were, in earnestly requesting and entreating men to accept the astonishing mercies of Redemption. *Now then we are*

¹ Hebr. ii. 9.

² Mark, xvi. 15.

*ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.*¹

Here, perhaps, some objector may inquire ;
 “ Whence is it that the sufferings and the death of Christ were necessary to render God, thus characterised as Love, placable to transgressors ? ”

They were not necessary to render God placable to transgressors. They had no effect in rendering him placable. They were in no degree designed to render Him placable. There is no greater mistake concerning the purpose of the atonement of Christ than to imagine that its object was to render God placable. And why ? Because *God is love* : because the very phrase of rendering God placable implies, ignorantly and falsely, the existence of a feeling in the Divine Mind which never had a place, nor by any possibility could have a place there : because, foreknowing from eternity all the transgressions of every individual of the then uncreated human race, His love arranged, beforehand, means of pardon through the sacrifice of the *Lamb* thus *slain* in the Divine counsels *from the foundation of*

¹ 2 Cor. v. 20.

the world. Of what character must the means be? They must be means which, while they should signally display the love of God towards mankind, should also be in full accordance with His own holiness, and with the moral interests of the universe. Forgiveness was to be extended to the sinner. But how, without affording encouragement to sin? The penalty of the law was to be remitted. But how, without impairing the authority of the law? A wicked world was to be replaced in the favour of God. But how, without disparagement to His justice? A revolted province of his empire was to be reinstated in its privileges, yet neither making nor offering to make any satisfaction for its rebellion, But how, without holding forward inducements to other provinces to rebel? The Divine Love and the Divine Wisdom, alike infinite, had provided. *We have seen, and do testify, that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.*¹ *Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins.*² *The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*³ For.

¹ 1 John, iv. 14.² Gal. i. 4.³ Gal. ii. 20.

there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all.¹ Who is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.² Christ was the end of the law for righteousness.³ Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.⁴ Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us.⁵

Were not then the means employed by the Divine Mercy for the salvation of mankind so stupendously rich in wisdom and in love as to deserve the inexpressible admiration of men and of angels? Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the Father, God manifested in the flesh : he who in the beginning was with God, and was God, He by whom all things were created, visible and invisible, was made man, and crucified for men ! If we could suppose ourselves wholly unacquainted with the plan which it pleased God to adopt for our redemption ; if we were then to

¹ 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6. ² 1 Cor. i. 30. ³ Rom. x. 4.

⁴ Matth. v. 17, 18. ⁵ Gal. iii. 13.

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conceive ourselves to be informed that in some distant region of the universe there is a world the inhabitants of which have grievously sinned against their Creator, and are lying under the sentence of everlasting condemnation; if we were farther apprised that the compassionate love of their God purposes to bestow, on this rebellious race, an opportunity of being restored to his favour, and has devised means for making atonement for their transgressions and for rescuing the transgressor from the dominion of sin, means which not only are in perfect consistency with his wisdom, and his justice, and his holiness, but in the highest degree prove and glorify his love: though our minds, incapable of searching out the counsels of the Almighty, could not arrive at any discovery, could not attain to any reasonable conjecture, as to the nature of the means by which that ruined world was to be saved; could our imagination represent to itself any means so glorious in love, so wonderful in mercy, as those by which our heavenly Father has actually been pleased to save ourselves?

The resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ was the conclusive proof that He was the Son of

God; that the ransom which He had paid for sinners was accepted; and that He would raise all men from the dead at the last day. He ascended into heaven there to exercise in His glorified human nature the fulness of Divine Power for the protection of his Universal Church, and for the salvation of every individual who shall believe in Him, and obey Him. Thus He ever liveth to make intercession for us. *If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, the propitiation for our sins.*¹ To Him the final judgement of all mankind is committed, *because He was the Son of Man*²; because, though the Son of God, He humbled himself to become man. And thus His penitent servants are mercifully assured that they will not have a Judge *who cannot be touched with a feeling of our infirmities*; but one who on earth was made like unto his brethren, and was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.³

Are human salvation and the plan by which it is accomplished objects of interest to men only? They are objects of the deepest interest

¹ Hebr. viii. 25. ¹ John, ii. 1, 2.

² John, v. 22. 27.

³ Hebr. ii. 17. iv. 15.

to the universe. They are objects of the most influential importance to all created beings endowed with moral responsibility who may now exist, or who may be called into existence during eternity, in any portion of the unbounded empire of the Lord of all. The inhabitants of earth are *a spectacle to angels*. *There is joy in heaven over every penitent sinner. The angels are all ministering spirits unto those who shall be heirs of salvation.* The angels of the very children presented to our Redeemer *constantly beheld the face of the Lord God*. The mysteries of Redemption are depths *into which the angels desire to look*. The calling of the Gentiles into the Universal Church of Christ is also *to the intent that unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be made known by the Church the manifold wisdom of God*.¹ Think not that this earth, the abode of sinful man, this minute orb, this feeble spark amidst the blaze of the firmament, is an object little worthy of notice, in comparison with the magnificence of the surrounding wonders of Creative Power. Is it presumption to intimate that it may be more worthy of admiring contemplation, than

¹ Ephes. iii. 10.

each of them, than all? Is it presumption to believe that this earth has been dignified in a manner, and to a degree, unexampled in any other of the heavenly bodies revolving in infinite space? If on this minute and glimmering orb, and for the salvation of its sinful inhabitants, *Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*¹: then it is not presumption to believe that on this earth was accomplished the most astonishing, the most memorable, event that ever took place in the Divine administration of the universe; that on this earth was displayed the most decisive, the most affecting, proof ever given to the Universe that *God is Love*.

On certain parts of the Divine proceedings, either past, or prophetically announced as still future, questions have arisen, the subjects of which a due consideration of the intimate connection between events characterising the con-

¹ Philip. ii. 5—8.

duct of God respecting mankind and the moral interests of the Universe may tend in some measure to elucidate.

It has not unfrequently been asked, Why, after the original promise to Adam of a Redeemer, four thousand years were permitted to elapse before his appearance upon earth? Why were ignorance, and superstition, and idolatry, and wickedness, suffered during so many ages to reign triumphant over the world? To all such inquiries it would be a conclusive reply, that He who gave the promise knew the fittest period for fulfilling it; and therefore reserved *the times and the seasons in his own power*. "Yet might it not have been expected," the objector answers, "that a shorter interval would have been sufficient to dispose men to welcome the Messiah?" Even the longer interval did not suffice to produce that effect. But setting apart that line of discussion, is there not reason for believing that the open spectacle of a world perseveringly continuing during four thousand years under the dominion of evil, notwithstanding the revelations of the Divine will from time to time vouchsafed to it, and the mercies and the judgements displayed upon it,

might most beneficially manifest to beings in worlds beyond our own sphere such proofs of the malignity and hatefulness of sin, as the same spectacle exhibited during a shorter period would not have adequately impressed?

Surprise has also been felt at the slow progress of Christianity during eighteen hundred years since its promulgation: at the corruptions by which it has been and is still defaced; and at its little more than nominal influence over a large proportion of its professors. But may not these unequivocal demonstrations of human depravity and of the tenacity with which sin retains its victims in blindness and bondage, be employed as warnings and spiritual safeguards to dwellers in other worlds now in a state of trial, or hereafter to be created and to be subjected to probation?

There is yet to ensue upon earth a period prophetically announced in the Old Testament under a variety of grand and beautiful figures indicative of holiness and happiness, and extended in the New Testament over not fewer than a thousand years, during which the author of evil shall be chained in the abyss, and all the kingdoms of this world shall become the king-

doms of our Lord and of His Christ. That God, after having permitted the wilful disobedience of men to overspread the earth with confusion and misery during many thousands of years, should glorify himself by rendering it in long and splendid contrast the manifestation of righteousness and felicity, can excite no surprise. But when we read that at the termination of the Millennium Satan, loosed from his prison, shall find the nations of the earth prepared for a new outbreak of rebellion against the Most High¹, we are astounded. Yet may not this overwhelming demonstration that sin, when once it has implanted itself in any class of beings, can be eradicated by no power but that of the Holy Spirit of God, be a lesson of instruction to the Universe, and throughout eternity?

If the preceding suppositions be realities, are not they collateral signs that *God is Love*?

¹ Rev. xx. 7. 10.

CHAP. XI.

THE SAME SUBJECT CONTINUED — WITH RESPECT TO A FUTURE EXISTENCE.

THE comfort of a Christian in the present life rests on the prospect of a happy existence after death. Beset by the troubles common to all men ; bearing strongly in mind the uncertainty and the short continuance of all earthly possessions and enjoyments ; perpetually feeling and lamenting his sinfulness, and the worthlessness of his best actions when tried by the holy law of his God : he turns his thoughts to futurity, and supports and delights himself in the hope that, when this *house* of his *earthly tabernacle is dissolved*, it shall be replaced to him by *a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. In this hope the true disciple of Christ is warranted by the Gospel, which has brought life and immortality to light. He is warranted in it by the most solemn and express declarations of his Saviour. Our Lord affirms, that *in his Father's house are*

many mansions; that in the unbounded and il-
limitable dominions of the Almighty, in com-
parison with the extent of which all conceivable
space is but a point, are worlds beyond worlds ca-
pable of receiving all the created servants of God,
whether angels, or spirits of just men made
perfect, or purified beings of whatever other
nature and description unrevealed to man, into
abodes of secure and appropriate happiness. Of
this animating intelligence He communicates, as
it were, additional confirmation to his apostles,
by an assurance uniting the simple dignity of
truth with the most affectionate condescension—
If it were not so, I would have told you: had the
case been otherwise, I would not have deluded
you by any groundless expectations. He pro-
ceeds to apply the encouragement specially to
themselves. And in that application, manifestly
addressing them also as the representatives of
all who should afterwards believe on him through
their ministry and the ministry of their suc-
cessors, he carries forward the promise to all
true Christians even to the end of the world:—
*I go to prepare a place for you.*¹

Respecting these promised mansions in his

¹ John, xiv. 2.

Father's house, in which our Redeemer since His ascension into heaven has provided an everlasting abode for His faithful followers; respecting the nature of the blessedness which shall there be their unfading portion; and respecting the changes which, if we ourselves shall be admitted through His atonement and His grace into those regions of bliss, will be wrought in our own nature, in our capacities and in our powers, in order to qualify us for the occupations of heaven, for the society of angels, for the presence of God; the mind may reasonably feel a deep and longing interest, an ardent desire for all the knowledge which it is lawful for man to possess. Yet reflection will speedily convince us that these are subjects on which our present knowledge of particulars cannot be great. Great it cannot be; for it cannot exceed the measure of our existing faculties. If the righteous are to be exalted after death to a more elevated state of existence, to a state of existence wholly different from the condition of mortal life upon earth; it is to be presumed that faculties wholly new, and adapted to new objects, will be conferred on those glorified spirits. Even

if the intellectual change then to be manifested in the immortal soul were but a change in degree; if the powers then to be possessed, then to be developed and exercised in the contemplation and the enjoyment of the unknown objects of eternity, were to be merely the present faculties of man exalted and expanded in measure proportioned to the difference between earth and heaven: how could that immense enlargement be comprehended by the existing scantiness of human perception? How then could new faculties, how could the objects with which they are to be conversant, be rendered intelligible to man? How could they be comprehended by a being who does not himself possess the faculties, nor understand nor know the objects? Take a man who has been blind from his birth. Can you communicate to him any distinct idea of the faculty of seeing? Can you cause him to understand the nature of light, of colours, of the visible forms and appearances of the woods, and the mountains, and the clouds? Take another who has always been completely deaf. Can you convey to him any conception of sound, of language, of conversation, of music? As rea-

sonably might you expect to render sight intelligible to the blind, and hearing to the deaf, as to comprehend in your present state the unknown faculties with the possession of which departed saints are to be blessed, or the objects on which those faculties are to be employed. It is not only in magnitude, but in nature also, that the things which God has prepared for those who love Him are such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive. Neither would it be consistent with the wisdom of God, so far as we may presume to reason by the analogies which the Scriptures furnish, nor with the statements which he has there recorded concerning human obligations, that the knowledge in question should be largely communicated to men, even if they were capable of understanding it. A wide insight into the details of future existence beyond the grave would have been inconsistent with that course of duty which God has appointed to us while on this side of the grave. As followers of Christ we are to *walk by faith, not by sight*.¹ We are not to be made acquainted with the

¹ 2 Cor. v. 7.

mysteries of eternity. We are not to refuse to trust our Redeemer who died for us farther than we see him. We are to remember that faith is the evidence of things unseen. Though *our life*, if we are servants of Christ, *is hid with Christ in God*; though *it doth not yet appear what we shall be*¹; we are with undoubting confidence to leave the sources and the adjustment of everlasting blessedness in the hands of its glorious author, who purchased it on the Cross.

But while, for the evident reasons which have been stated, possibly on various other accounts also, which do not or cannot present themselves to mortal conceptions, the New Testament does not profess to furnish detailed information concerning the nature of heavenly existence; it neither forbears from throwing some general light on the subject, nor suffers us to remain without decisive demonstration that the happiness and glory reserved for the blessed in heaven are greater than language can describe.

Let us attend to some of the leading circumstances which the Scriptures have revealed.

¹ Coloss. iii. 3. 1 John, iii. 2.

In the first place, the Sacred Writings pronounce that unhappiness of every kind and in every degree, together with all the causes, and instruments, and occasions of discomfort, shall be for ever unknown in heaven. *There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.*¹ These are appendages and adjuncts to the mortal frame, and together with the mortal frame will drop away from the ascending spirit of the righteous. Above all, sin, the origin of all misery, is excluded. Into the kingdom of God nothing entereth that defileth. The Devil and his angels are cast into hell, and bound in everlasting chains. To the same prison, to the same chains, wicked men, the servants of the Devil, are consigned for ever. In heaven all is unsullied peace, and joy, and security, and holiness.

In the next place, the greatness of the happiness and of the glory of the righteous is declared by the nature of the general terms in which they are described. The signs and emblems, which are employed by the Holy

¹ Rev. xxi. 4.

Ghost in the Sacred Writings to express that happiness and glory, must necessarily be borrowed from objects and circumstances which are familiar to men. And they are uniformly chosen from objects and circumstances which bear in the eyes of men the strongest impressions of power, dignity, and delight. Thus the righteous are represented as inheriting a kingdom; as wearing a crown of glory that fadeth not away; as reigning with Christ; as sitting with Christ on his throne; as shining like the brightness of the firmament, like the sun and the stars for ever and ever. They are with God in heaven, in the habitation of his holiness, the place where his honour dwelleth; with God, in whose presence is fulness of joy, and at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore,

Farther; the body is to be raised from the grave and again united to the soul, that in every particular the happiness of the individual may be complete. The body which on earth was a clog and a burden, a continual occasion of anxiety and pain, sinking under infirmities, and tending to decay, shall be changed in its nature, purified in its qualities, fitted for the

bliss of its heavenly abode. This corruptible must put on incorruption; this mortal must put on immortality. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. Christ shall change our vile body, that it may be like unto His glorious body, according to the wonderful working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself.

Farther; the blessedness of heaven will in part consist in the delight which the righteous will experience in the society of holy men of all generations from the beginning of the world. The Patriarchs of ancient days; the Prophets, who in succession were luminaries of the Church of God through a long course of ages; the Apostles of our Lord; the Martyrs, who, with Saint Stephen at the head of the glorious company, for the love of their Redeemer laid down their lives; all the Saints of the Most High whose characters we read with reverence in the Scriptures; all the excellent of the earth who in various lands and in various periods have trodden in their steps;—all will be

assembled in heaven to welcome every other servant of God as a brother, and to contribute to the increase of his happiness.

But among these new associates from distant regions and ages, these new promoters of his felicity, the righteous man will also meet others, once like himself inhabitants of earth; associates who, if they do not excite equally sublime emotions, will awaken and perpetuate more tender recollections. He will meet all those friends, all those relatives, all those companions endeared and united to him by the closest of human ties, who, like himself, have died in the Lord. He meets them never again to be separated. He meets them to dwell together in bliss never to be dimmed by offences, by infirmities, by contentions, by jealousies, by suspicions, by any of those disquietudes which shade with passing clouds the purest sunshine of human friendships and affections. He meets them with the certainty that their happiness and his own, both already inexpressible, will be uninterruptedly heightened throughout eternity by mutual participation.

But still more to enhance his blessedness, he

is surrounded by a yet nobler host of companions in glory, the innumerable company of angels; the countless myriads of those heavenly spirits, who, having been called into being by the voice of God in the unknown depths of duration antecedently to the existence of the earth, withstood the rebellious wiles of Satan, kept their first estate, and are established in it for ever. But can men, the offspring of yesterday, transgressors pardoned through grace, can they presume to join themselves to angels, can they be fitted to associate with the thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers of heaven? Yes. The redeemed inhabitants of the earth, justified through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and sanctified by his Spirit, *are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.*¹ If the spirits of just men made perfect are the associates of the angels, are equal to the angels; their faculties must be the faculties of angels, their occupations must be the occupations of angels. What views of magnified and multiplied blessedness are opened by these considerations! The righteous, endowed in

¹ Luke, xx. 36.

heaven with the powers now granted to angels, will become jointly with the Angels ministering spirits to the Most High; will contemplate His works, will comprehend His operations, will execute His purposes, will rejoice in manifesting His glory, throughout the universe of creation, and during existence without end.

But loftier certainties of bliss remain. The righteous shall dwell through eternity in the immediate presence of God Himself; in communion, resembling the intercourse between children and a father, with the fulness of Infinite Perfection. *They shall ever be with the Lord*¹— with the Lord Jesus Christ; with the Son, with the Father, and with the Holy Ghost. Not only shall they for ever be with the Lord, their glorified Redeemer, but to that glorified Redeemer shall they be rendered like in glory; and not only in the splendour of outward glory, but like to Him in the nature of the powers and faculties with which, as the Christ exalted to heaven, he is arrayed. Are their bodies become like unto His glorified body? Their spirits also are become like unto His glorified Spirit. The words of St. John

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 17.

concerning the state of the true servants of Christ at the resurrection proceed argumentatively and decisively to that conclusion. *When he shall appear, we shall be like Him : for we shall see Him as He is.*¹ St. John first affirms that the righteous shall be like unto Christ : and then proves their likeness to Christ by stating that they will see Christ *as He is*. He argues that, as inferior animals could not see a man as he is, could not discern the nature of a man, could not comprehend his faculties, could not have any perception of his characteristic excellences, unless they should themselves first be raised to the possession of human faculties, to a rational and moral conformity with man : so the righteous in heaven could not see Christ as he is, they could not comprehend the powers, and the excellences, and the glory of Christ, unless they were themselves endowed with a large measure of the same glorious powers and excellences. But they are to see Christ *as He is* : therefore they are to partake of the excellences of His glorified nature. They are to be like unto Christ : they are for ever to enjoy the immeasurable

¹ 1 John, iii. 2.

privilege, dignity, and blessedness of being like unto the Son of God.

Judge, then, whether St. Paul employed too strong language; judge whether his language, if stronger could have been found, would not have been liable to be reprov'd for its weakness; when he affirmed that the blessings which God has prepared for those who love Him are such as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man to conceive. Judge how inexpressibly glorious must be that place, which Christ is gone to prepare among the many mansions of His Father's house for the redeemed who shall be made like unto Him, and shall dwell with Him throughout eternity.

Could we desire additional proof that *God is Love*?

CHAP. XII.

CONCLUSION.

THE investigations pursued in the preceding chapters have illustrated, by their concurrent results, the truth of the scriptural position, that *God is Love*. Not that we are to presume, that while we receive with unhesitating submission any truth revealed from God, and then proceed, according to the general encouragements conveyed in His word, to impress it on our minds by examination of circumstances in His works of creation, and in the various dispensations of His Providence confirming that truth, that incidental difficulties, or seeming incongruities in detached instances, may not present themselves. How can limited and feeble reason fathom the depths of Infinite Wisdom ! Such difficulties and seeming incongruities fall within the province of faith. “ Rather,” exclaims an objector, “ within the province of credulity.” No. The two provinces are discriminated by accurate boundaries. To mistake or to dis-

regard their respective boundaries is one of the most common errors of scepticism in religion. Faith believes on sufficient evidence; credulity on insufficient. Scepticism is incredulous in the face of the sufficient evidence which is justly satisfactory to faith. The special objects of faith are facts, the reality of which cannot at present be ascertained to us by our own actual knowledge, but is believed on the credit due to the testimony of others. That God is love, we believe on the word of Himself, who is the *God of truth, who cannot lie*.¹ If, in a reverent examination of the Divine proceedings, so far as our faculties are competent to the inquiry, we meet, among many clear confirmations of the fact, some insulated points in which we discern not its operation, or even imagine that indications militating against it seem apparent, what conclusion will sober reason suggest? It will teach us, in the first place, to ask ourselves, "Are you convinced that all Scripture is given by inspiration of God?" Firmly. "Are the words of Scripture respecting Love as an attribute of God definite and plain?" Indisputably: *God is Love*. "Remember, then, the narrow

¹ Titus, i. 2. Hebr. vi. 18.

range, the feeble powers, of the human intellect. Remember that *you now see things as through a glass darkly: that the ways of God are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts: that although clouds and darkness are round about Him, righteousness and judgement are the habitation of His throne.*"¹

Is additional elucidation desired respecting the just authority of faith, and the sound process of reasoning, as each has here been stated? Behold it in the ordinary transactions of life. Behold it in your own. Consider in how many instances you assent on the testimony of observant and credible men to alleged facts which you have not personal means of verifying, and even though some incidental grounds of hesitation as to their certainty might be perceptible. But let us represent a single case bearing as near a degree of resemblance as may be to our immediate subject. Suppose yourself to have received through life continual and great kindnesses from a particular individual, in whom you have also remarked the steady influence of strict principles of veracity. Yet suppose that, in a recent transaction, you think that

¹ 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Isaiah, lv. 8, 9. Psalm xcvi. 2.

some traces are discernible of absence of kindness. He assures you that, although he cannot as yet put you into possession of the explanatory circumstances, you will find your suspicions to have been groundless. You would say, "The experience of the past satisfies me that his affirmation is true, and his kindness undiminished." If such would be the confidence given to the assurance of a human being subject to the frailties and the sinfulness pressing upon every man; what is the faith due to the word of the Most High? What is the faith due to God, *with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning*¹; to Jesus Christ, *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*?²

A question, most important to us individually, remains: What is to be the practical influence upon ourselves of the conviction that *God is Love*?

The answer is included in the declaration of St. John; *We love Him, because He first loved us.*³

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the

¹ James, i. 17. ² Hebr. xiii. 8. ³ 1 John, iv. 10.

first and great commandment; a commandment, rightly so placed and so denominated, because it plainly comprehends every other. Its binding force rests on the sovereignty of God; but is farther impressed upon our hearts by the love which He has displayed towards us. Most justly, therefore, are we required, *whatsoever we do, to do all to the glory of God.*¹ Similar reasoning is irresistibly applied by St. Paul as to our duty to our Redeemer. *The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again.*²

*Whosoever, said our Lord, shall confess me before men, him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I deny before my Father which is in heaven.*³ As dedicated to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, can we build up ourselves on our most holy faith, which was once delivered to the saints,—a faith which is to

¹ 1 Cor. x. 31.

² 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

³ Matth. x. 33, 34. In Mark, viii. 38. and Luke, ix. 26. the expressions are, *Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and of my words.*

work in us by love ; can we keep ourselves in the love of God, can we pray in the Holy Ghost, can we look for mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life,¹ if we are ashamed of Him and of His words ?

Our Divine Redeemer descended from heaven, became man, and suffered on the Cross, not solely that He might make atonement for the sins of the world, but also that He might pour out upon men the sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit, to rescue the heart of the sinner from the dominion of the powers of darkness, to convert him from the love of evil to the love of holiness ; to accomplish in him progressively a moral transformation, rendering him so different from his former self that he may justly be described in language figurative but not hyperbolical, as *born again, created anew, a new creature in Christ Jesus.*² The change was to be proved by its fruits. *He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.*³ How then are we to

¹ Jude, 3. 20. Gal. v. 6.

² John, iii. 3—5. 2 Cor. v. 17. Ephes. ii. 9. iv. 24.

³ Titus, ii. 14.

know whether we love our Redeemer? He has set before us a plain criterion. *If ye love me, keep my commandments. If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings.*¹

But our Lord Jesus Christ is not only our Lawgiver; He is personally our pattern in all holiness. Having died for all, He commands us to love all men for His sake; and by this proof, among other testimonies, to evince our love for Himself. *A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another: as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*² Well might it be termed a *new commandment*, when renewed by such authority, and enforced by such an example. His apostles frequently repeat the direction. Thus St. Paul addresses the Ephesians: *Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God.*³ The First Epistle of St. John abounds,

¹ John, xiv. 15. 21. 23, 24. ² John, xiii. 34, 35.

³ Eph. v. 2.

particularly in the third and fourth chapters, with similar passages. Encouragements and warnings are frequently united by the sacred writers. St. Paul, while he concludes one of his epistles with a prayer that *Grace may be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity*,¹ closes another with announcing the awful judgements awaiting any man who does not love Him.² *For this cause*, he elsewhere adds *I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you according to the riches of His glory to be strengthened with might by His spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the length, and breadth, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God*.³

God, then, is Love. His love never faileth. *We know that all things work together for good to them that love God*.⁴ His love is immeasur-

¹ Eph. vi. 24.

² Eph. iii. 14—19.

³ 1 Cor. xvi. 22.

⁴ Rom. viii. 28.

able in length, in breadth, in depth, in height ; in all its dimensions great beyond the extent of our conceptions. *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered Him up for us all ; how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things ?* Are you faithful servants of the Son of God ? Persevere. Then shall all things be given unto you through Him,—*Whom having not seen ye love ; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory ; receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.*²

¹ Rom. viii. 32.

² 1 Peter, i. 8, 9.

THE END.

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